Tragico Historia by BlizzardRose

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Summary:

AU: The reason Martin Brenner even got involved with Hawkins Lab was to save his eleven-year-old daughter, Maggie. In the years since her death passed and Brenner has become a cog in the machine until Eleven, and Maggie's memory through her, give 'Papa' the courage to face his own demons and seek redemption and the happiness taken from him.

Part 1 of the "Brightest Light / Darkest Shadow" Duology
This fic was inspired by the sweet real-life relationship between Millie Bobby Brown and Matthew Modine and I thought it'd be a fun premise to explore.

1. Thirteen

Author's Note:

- For Ab0019.

  > Hi guys! So I finally got onto the Stranger Things bandwagon and this idea popped into my head so I figured I'd share. I'm only one chapter into this, so any comments would be SUPER helpful here! Kudos are appreciated too! Enjoy!

Chapter 1 -
February 19 1984

Eleven

I was a year older today, Papa said. I did not know what that meant but it seemed a happy occasion that involved Eggos and ice cream. “You are 13 today, Eleven,” he said sitting beside me after placing the treat with a candle in the middle of it. “On this candle you blow it out and make a wish.”

“Wish?” I did not know how to make a wish, I never had made one before.

“Yes. Something you desire to happen,” he said. I thought about it: the only thing I had wanted other than Eggos and to make people happy was to get away from the Bad Place, which I had months ago when people called reporters had come and had cameras to see inside the Bad Place. I remembered many of the Bad Men did not welcome these cameras, but for some reason Papa had known about them and was not scared. I think he might have invited them there.

I always had a theory that despite all he had done to me, Papa loved me. He had saved me from the Bad Place. So maybe that was love. Since then, he was sweet. He said often

“I blow out?” I asked Papa, wondering if he wanted me to blow out the flame with my powers, something relatively easy.

“Yes. And wish, Eleven, but do not tell what you wished.” The candle flickered and then went out just staring at it. Papa came up behind me and placed his hands on my shoulders, softly. No hurt, just nice.

I wished for happiness like this forever. And I wouldn’t tell for fear it might not come true. “I love you, Eleven.”

“Love?” I didn’t know that word. “What is love?”

“Love is when people care about others but it comes in all different sorts,” he said kneeling down so he could be at my level and giving me a hug. “I care about you, Eleven.”

Martin Brenner

After Eleven ate her Eggo treat I had found how to make in the paper I gave her the present I had bought for her to celebrate this milestone in her life that Maggie never got to experience. I suppose that it was because of this loss and knowing the true evil of the MKUltra program first hand that I was here after coming out of some alternative dimension wherein a bereaved man would be turned into very much the monsters that had taken everything from him when they’d taken her. It might be exactly that or it could be deeper: that I had realized that in my infiltration I was the only monster there was because of my willingness to submit if that meant finding out the truth. Submission becomes complacency and complacency roots evil. The version of me that Maggie had known in her childhood was not the man Eleven knew as ‘Papa’ and for that Maggie’s specter hated the man I was trying to destroy since the escape.

But then again my time with Eleven had already brought me challenges that I would never
Perhaps that was the reason why I wanted Eleven to be given the world was that need for atonement, to make Maggie see that in trying to find out what had been done to her I found myself after losing sight of the man a child thought had hung the stars. Today I was going to tell Eleven her name and once again find myself at the feet of this little child, teenager now, that I had taken so much from. Not me, but who I had become. Who I hated. Who used the degrees awarded to me for what he defined as good but soon had twisted the notion of the word.

“This is for you,” I handed her the wrapped packages, “You open them.” Obedient, she did. The silver paper tore away to reveal photographs in frames: one of Terry Ives, one of her in a dress she had selected not long after escaping the lab with me after I had burned the place in an act of freeing arson. In the picture, Eleven’s hair had grown quickly to be at her chin and the yellow dress she had wanted making her look like a young girl, manifesting my shame almost like Maggie was standing there looking at me and staring at me in disappointment. It should’ve been her and now she has to make sure the Bad Man, the warped because of loss Martin Brenner, not return to hurt my second chance.

“Pretty,” Eleven said. She held up the picture of her mother, “Who?”

“Your mother.”

“Mama?”

“Yes.”

“Where?” Eleven’s light in her brown eyes almost made me want to look away. There was nothing I could tell her about Terry Ives’ fate that wouldn’t stir her curiosity and manifest Maggie as my ghost of shame as I tried to escape my past as hard as the girl before me, the one who trusted me in spite of all I’d done to wrong her.

“We will see her one day,” If I had at any chance at redemption with Eleven I must not dance around Terry Ives or I lose. I lose, and my redemption is meaningless. I lose, and it’s just like nothing ever happened. I lose, and the idea of redemption itself shatters. Eleven looked at the picture longer and then picked up the one of herself that on the frame had her true name written.

“Papa? Jane?” she pointed to the letters, “Who?”

“You,” I told her. She shook her head and showed me the number on her arm, the idea I was no better than the Germans rising in my throat as I could almost hear Maggie, innocent as Eleven but having use of words she didn’t. You did this to her. They did it to me. I thought you were coming to save me, Papa! But you didn’t! You let them hurt her! “You are Jane, Eleven. Jane Mildred Ives.”

“Jane. Pretty. I am Jane, Papa.”

2. Sign of the Times / Don't You Forget About Me

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi all! So this fic is going to be eventually a Mike/ Eleven one I've decided! But I loved introducing Mike this chapter as well as Eleven's "pretty" birthday dress and more insight into the mysterious Margaret "Maggie" Brenner and how she's the driving force behind Brenner's change.
>
> As always, kudos are awesome but I'd love some comments to help me know if this is any good!

Chapter 2- Sign of the Times / Don't You Forget About Me
February 19, 1984

Eleven

Birthdays, Papa said, were special days where there are lots of celebrations. I had never known that but it seemed like a fun idea. I got a pretty dress today that was, I thought, maybe prettier than the one Nancy Wheeler had that I wore last year. My new dress was green and it had a big white bow that tied at the waist. I had on socks and shoes called Mary Janes (not me Jane, though).

"You look very pretty, Jane," Papa said and gave me a hug that meant I was safe, like when I was younger. Not punished. Safe. I didn't know if I was used to being Jane yet so I pointed to the tattoo of my name on my arm to him and then pointed at myself.

"Eleven," I said, "More used to Eleven, Papa. Thank you for the hug, I feel safe." I was nowhere near used to receiving material gifts, but the affection I had grown up on from Papa seemed conditional but in these last few months, it had flipped. He was sorry, I could tell and I wondered why he'd become so.

But regardless of how, I forgave him. How could I not? He was Papa.

"May I call you Jane, Eleven? See if you like it? It's the name your

mother gave you," he asked, his eyes full of some emotion I didn't know the name of as he looked at my name I'd shown him although he obviously already knew it. I thought about this and nodded.

"Jane," I said, "But Eleven, too."

Martin Brenner

Jane's presence was like the ghost of Maggie reprimanding me constantly. I could never not see Maggie, about Jane's height, as some apparition that stood by Jane whenever I looked at her. Today, especially, with Jane being unfamiliar with such an important concept of adolescence as the thirteenth birthday Maggie never had, Maggie made herself even more present than usual.

With every breath Jane took, her chest rising and falling under the green fabric that announced her as a person and not this experiment that I'd associated her with for most of her life. She came to hug me again, her words seconds earlier about this last hug being a safe one prompted a voice in my head: not Jane's. Maggie's.

You're not one of them, Papa. I know it! Show it to her! Avenge me by loving her like you loved me. I know you can! I saw you do it. You're better than they are, you just made a mistake. Jane's simple hug seemed to make me want to be the man Maggie had known me to be and the one Jane assumed I was. A redeemed man, saved by an unwillingness to go on as a vital part of the machine I'd hated for years. "Your welcome, Jane."

"Jane. What do people do on birthdays, Papa? Do you know?"

"We do whatever you wish."

"I wish for more Eggos and hugs like safe hugs," she said and the knife of the past slashed me once again. Both so simple; I wanted her to demand of me the world, answers to why I had done to her what I had, but no. All she wanted was Eggos. And to be loved as an individual. She was not a teenage girl in heart, but a child who had yet to live even the simplest concepts and sought to live them first.

Mike Wheeler

It was El's birthday today, so when I got home from school I got on my bike to go see her. The guys were playing D&D at Will's tonight and I thought we should invite El. I had asked Mom for money to buy her a cake for El since I didn't know how to bake one. I had a mixtape with El's favorite song, "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go" by Wham! Ready to play for her.

El had ridden her bike she'd gotten over to my house after school and I had eagerly come to meet her. She looked really pretty in this green dress with her hair slightly curly and I found my cheeks warming as she came up to the door. Ever since Will had been back I had not been able to deny I liked El to the guys any longer. And I really couldn't deny it to myself, either.

"Mike."

"Happy birthday, El," I gave her a hug, even more aware of her heart beating against mine as I held her. Pulling away she smiled.

"Jane, Mike," she said.

"Jane?"

"Papa said I am Jane, but you call me El. You still can," I had no idea what she was talking about but it sounded important to her so I would definitely ask her later.

3. Look What You Did / Birthday Cake

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi all! So I'm really digging this story and I'm actually a few chapters ahead and loving where it's going. As always, I love kudos so keep them up! Also, I am in desperate need of comments since I'm still unsure where this is going or if it's any good at all. So drop one by if you'd be so kind!

Chapter 3- Look What You Did
Flashback, January 1984
Martin Brenner

A month before Jane Ives' thirteenth birthday I woke up to hear her scream.

Even though the house I had bought with a sum of the money Hawkins Lab had paid me was quite large it was like she was right next to me when in fact she was a floor above. If the lights had been on, they would've flickered as Jane's main reaction to fear was to use her powers.

I'd had the foresight to take Jane to a psychologist who had suggested she was suffering from post-traumatic stress. Of course when the diagnosis had been handed down, Jane hadn't an idea what it meant but I did of course and the voice in my head: Look what you did to her, Papa! You did it! She's this way because of what you did.

Getting to the room that was the largest in the house with the windows behind her bed proclaiming night I turned on the light to find her standing upright, blood from her nose resting above her lip but blood on her legs, tears dripping down her face like she had failed a test. "Papa. Why?" she said, "I tried to stop it. Didn't want to be punished. Won't stop.'

I picked her up, unlike the last time in the Hawkins Lab because this time her arms wrapped around me in fear. They had never done that. "No, Eleven," I said, "You won't be punished. You can't control this,"

And then Maggie's disappointment: Look what you did Papa.

Present, February 19, 1984
Eleven

Mike said birthdays had cake and he showed me the one he'd bought for me, it looked like an Eggo like the treat Papa had for me. "Eggos are cake?" I asked him, happy at the thought. I didn't know Eggos could be so many different things but then again Papa had filled Eggos with ice cream so maybe.

"I couldn't find an Eggo cake," Mike hung his head, "Sorry El." I gave him a hug because the thought of him just thinking about me this much made me feel special.

"No sorry,' I said giving him a smile, "Birthdays are happy, so be happy Mike," I squeezed his hand and he led me down to the basement of Will's. Mrs. Byers also had something for me: it was a pretty silver thing she put on my wrist. "Pretty," I said. "Thank you."

"You're welcome, sweetie. Happy birthday," Mrs. Byers was nice and ever since Will had been back and safe she had seemed like a mama to me since I didn't have a mama close by. But Papa seemed like a good mama too with buying me pretty clothes and being very attentive to me.

Downstairs I found Dustin, Lucas, and Will crowded around the board game. "Son of a bitch," Dustin said in exasperation after he'd rolled something (I wasn't sure how D&D worked exactly) but he looked up and smiled at me. "Happy birthday Eleven."

"Thanks," I said.

"Mike got you a cake," Will said as he stopped the music coming from the boombox, an upbeat song I was interested in listening to since it reminded me of the Wham! Music I'd heard that day I was out with Papa and then said Wham! Was my favorite."Song?" I asked.

"It's 'Come on Eileen,'" Lucas said.

“I like.”

Mike Wheeler

Mrs. Byers come down and cut the cake for El for us, each giving us a slice of the vanilla sugary treat. “It’s sweet,” I said to El as she looked at it curiously, “You’ll love it.” At least I hoped she’d love it because if she didn’t I knew my face would turn red in embarrassment that I hadn’t asked her if she even had a favorite cake.

“Good,” she said after taking a bite and I felt my cheeks flush, Dustin snickered and I rolled my eyes at him. Now was not the time to make fun of me with El here. “How you get this?”

“I went to the store and bought it,” I said, “Although you can make them at home if you have the things you need and directions.”

“We make one at my house,” she told me and pointed at us, “All.” I knew El lived in the big house where the Hawkins Lab had partially been in the heart of the town so it was impossible to miss her house that had gates and large chimneys and I think she had servants or something that Lucas thought might be former lab employees. Where he got that idea, I had no idea.

“That’ll be fun,” I said.

“For birthdays,” she said, “Who is tomorrow?”

“My birthday is in March,” Will offered, “Next month. We can make a cake then at your house.”

“Yes,” El said, “Yes.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> Also, I am living for this AU version of El. She's my favorite!

4. Any Way You Want It / Small Town (Princess) Girl

Notes for the Chapter:

> Y'ALL I GOT A COMMENT! Ahh! That makes me happy! As always, please keep the feedback coming, it inspires me to keep this story going. Thoughts and suggestions welcome, don't be shy!

Chapter 4- Anyway You Want It / Small Town (Princess), Girl
February 20, 1984

Eleven

The day after my birthday I woke up in my room at home. My bed was really nice and warm with lots of pillows, covers, and a feeling of safety in it. I had a boombox on the table by my bed along with a phone I could talk to Mike and my friends on as long as it wasn't too late. There was also an intercom in my room that I could call to Papa on if I needed him.

I got up and went to pick out other clothes, that I had lots of now I think. I liked the pretty ones but not the crazy ones I saw other girls on the TV wear or sometimes Nancy might wear. Papa said my new clothes style I liked looked like Audrey Hepburn and Jackie O and had shown me pictures of them in magazines. I liked Jackie O because people loved her and she was really pretty. I chose a red long sleeve shirt and a plaid skirt. I had Dorothy slippers, which were red shoes, to match.

I put on my new song (the new one 'Come on Eileen') on my boombox through the mixtape and listened to the nice words and happy beat. I looked at myself in the full-length mirror and I wondered if that was really me: Eleven and Jane. I started to dance like I had seen on the TV as Papa came in and gave me a hug. A nice one, the ones I lived for. "Did you have a good birthday, Jane?"

"Yes," I said, "Thank you, Papa. And El, Papa. You can call me El. It's what friends call me. We are friends because I forgive you."

Martin Brenner

We are friends because I forgive you.

I picked Jane, El she'd corrected, up in my arms and I could almost feel the smile in Maggie's ghostly presence. I did not deserve Jane Ives' forgiveness, I knew that, but she was so purely good she granted it to me because she might sense my remorse around her. "I love you, Papa." When she said it I heard Maggie repeat it in my head. I love you. I forgive you. I absolve you. El is your second chance, Papa! She's showing you that! Take it!

I put El on her feet and bowed my hand to her, "This is how you dance with someone else," I said and she took my hands, following my feet with her steps. I twirled her and she laughed almost like the little child in the hospital gown in a rare moment of bliss but now as a young girl who had come into a sum of money she could live off of the rest of her life but she was unaware and didn't care.

After the song, I summoned Ray Carroll, who had agreed to work for me in this new life in exchange for keeping his name clear in the information I had helped leak when the story about Hawkins Lab had broken last year. Ray was one of the many seeking amnesties but one of the few I had actually granted it to. It was his job to wait on El hand and foot if that's what she wanted, or else I would have no problem disposing of him. "Yes, Miss Jane? Is it time for Eggos?"

"Chocolate chip," she replied.

"Of course," he said and he followed her behind me out of her room down the stairs. The grand stairs led down to the kitchen and living area that was flanked by windows to let in light from the sun. El took a seat at the table and I got El some tea that she liked from when I had Ray buy it last. "Today?" she asked, wondering the activity of the day. "We go walking."

"A walk? Of course."

Eleven

We went to the Hawkins park and since it was sunny we could sit on the benches and soak the warmth in. “Papa,” I said looking at the trees thinking about what I had seen on TV this morning, “What is a princess? On TV they were talking about her. She has pretty blond hair and a baby.”

“She is royalty in England,” he said, “Like you are royalty of Hawkins or I think so.” I took a bite of my Eggo I had brought with me. The sun was hitting the trees perfectly to give them a sort of halo and I watched in fascination.

“Mike says he thinks I have lots of money,” I said, “He says that’s incredible.”

“We do, El.”

“To buy Eggos?”

“As many Eggos as you want.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> Also, I'm living for cute El Brenner. All she wants is Eggos and love, y'all

5. I Absolve You

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi, lovelies!
>
> Here's the next chapter! In it we meet someone new which is exciting, so why not drop by your thoughts with a kudos or better yet a comment to tell me what you think!

Chapter 5- I Absolve You
February 20, 1984

Martin Brenner

I sent Ray out for more Eggos and something for dinner. El was actually quite the good eater, liking fish and chicken very much and mashed potatoes. With the money from the lab, we had hired a chef called Wylder who now understood El's tastes well. With us still at the park sitting on a bench, El asked me: "When's your birthday Papa? Mike and I will make a cake. Will's is next month."

"Mine is late next month. I was born many years ago in 1935. You were born in 1971," I told her, "That makes me many years older than you."

"1935?"

"I grew up during the War, my own papa fought in it against the Germans. Did you ever know about the War? It's why we're anxious about the Russians."

"Russian man in the other world," I reminded him, "His words I heard."

"I remember."

"I did good then, Papa, you said so," she looked at me and smiled as if the scars of the outnumbering bad memories of her childhood had already faded. Her smile was nothing but innocent and devoted love

as she understood the concept. “I absolve you,” she said like she had heard Maggie’s voice in my head, “I heard her say that in my dream. She said she was Maggie. Pretty.”

Maggie Brenner, in her “Heaven”
Date uncertain

Somehow Papa’s new daughter was able to reach me wherever I was, I’d like to say heaven. She was beautiful with little dark curls and wearing a nightgown when I met her. “Sister,” she said to me when she came to meet me, the light of heaven shining on her indicating she was only here to visit. I don’t think Papa would have let anyone kill her after they had killed me and kept it from him for years.

“Margaret Brenner,” I said hugging her, “Or Maggie,”

“Eleven,” She pointed to herself and the number on her arm, “Or El. Mike calls me El. He is a friend.”

“Can I be your friend?” I asked her, “Now that I know you can visit we can be friends.”

“Yes,” she said. “You love Papa.”

“He is my father, El. Of course I love him. But he has made some mistakes, and I’m sorry you were on the end of them.”

“Mistake?’

“He has done wrong things,” I said, “But I forgive him. I know you do too.”

“Yes.”

Eleven

“She’s sweet, Papa,” I said talking about the girl with long blond hair that called me Sister in my dreams, “She is my age and she loves you

very much. Her dimension is pretty, light everywhere." I looked at the sun reflecting off the trees and pointed to them so I might illustrate my point, "Like that."

Papa pulled me close to him and I wrapped my arms around him, "I absolve you," I said using Sister's word she liked to say to Papa when I talked to her. I had no idea what it meant. "What is absolve?"

"It means to forgive, like what you say to me, just a bigger word."

"Do you forgive me for all those times I was bad Papa?" I asked, thinking about how much I had been bad and not done as the Bad Men had said and I would be locked away in the dark room. I shuddered. "Say you do."

"El, there was nothing you did wrong."

6. Maggie

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hey guys! So much thanks go out to Aboo99 who has really been supporting the story that has evolved into the extraordinary life of El Brenner. I so enjoy working on this and must say that if the Duffer Brothers never flesh out Brenner's backstory with the same depth I have for this shame be on them.
>
> Anyway, enjoy! And remember, you can drop by a kudos or comment and I'd be SUPER HAPPY!

Chapter 6- Maggie
February 20, 1984

Eleven

I closed my eyes, wondering if I could talk to Maggie more and if she would like it here in the park. I promised to tell Papa what she was saying since she was his too and he missed her he told me a lot. He said I reminded him of her. Focusing deeply on getting to the lighted place I found myself there.

The sky was blue and the green fields were nowhere as pretty as the mountains painting the sky where it should have met the grass. Maggie had on a wreath of flowers on her head and I wanted one too. “How do I get?” I pointed to the wreath.

“I’ll make you one,” she took my hand and led me over to flowers of all colors, red and blue and yellow and pink. “What color do you like?”

“I’m wearing red today,” I said. She smiled and picked some red flowers, “Papa misses you.”

“I miss him too, but I can have you tell him things for me if that’s okay.”

“Yes,” I said, “Sister?”

“Yeah?”

“What did they do to you? Same as to me? When did you die?” I felt like the questions might be too personal so I wasn’t really expecting an answer. So when I got one, I was stunned not only because she didn’t think my question mean but also because I knew the date she said:

“February 19, 1971.”

Martin Brenner

I wiped the blood from El’s nose gently and picked her up, knowing that connecting to other dimensions or places in ours exhausted her powers and left her limp. Her arms wrapped around me and her tears melted onto the cotton of my shirt. “She died on birthday,” El said tearfully, “Sister died when I was born, that day. They killed her Papa! She told me. Oh, Papa!”

“I heard El. I know. I know,” her pain was that first stage of mine back in 1971. Disbelief. I had no idea when Maggie had actually even died, all I knew was the date I had found out. The date I had held newborn Jane Ives and had been taken aside and finally told the fate of my little girl that they had taken just like I had taken El in an act of compliance with what I’d known. But my revenge should have started right then, yet I had been too cowardly to realize it.

I walked away from the park with El in my grasp, her sniffles frequent. Although the sun was shining on her body all I could see was the darkness of grief consuming her emotions. Grief for someone she had never met but nonetheless her sister in trauma and pain. I took El home and put her in a bath to help her come back to herself. “No shut door,” she said as I put her in and I obeyed, understanding that she must be thinking this was the isolation tank and I was yet again visited by the dragon of shame. I let El lay in the bath’s warm water for a moment before helping her stand to run a warm washcloth over her skin and my other hand holding her secure. She smiled at me, having regained some strength. “This bath nice,” she said, “Warm and I can breathe. No monsters.”

“No monsters,” I assured her, “I’ve got you. I love you El.”

“I love you too Papa. I love this new life.”

When she said that, I knew she meant it. This life where I was trying to show her an identity that had been stolen from her, a childhood, a voice. And all she wanted from it was love in every action from those she was closest to. Love, appreciation. The material things were no concept to her and I realized the thing she meant about loving this new life was the love of the affection she received.

And I knew that Jane ‘El’ Brenner might be the best soul I had ever known. And I would do anything for her.

7. Faithfully

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hello, my lovelies!
>
> I love this chapter because Mike is being too adorable to handle and we get really in-depth with El's feelings and her anxiety brought on by PTSD which will be a major theme as we go on so if any of that's triggering I'll try to give heads up in my notes.
>
> As always, I love feedback so definitely drop some by in a kudos or comment!

Chapter 7- Faithfully
February 20, 1984

Mike Wheeler

I rode my bike over to El's after school. I had decided to ditch AV Club this week leaving Dustin, Lucas, and Will to carry on without me. I rode over to the gated house and I was let in, parking my bike by the steps that led to the front door flanked by Roman columns. One of the people working at El's let me in, "She's on the couch in the sitting room," he said.

"Thanks," I said heading there. I found El sitting in the rocker, covers over her, her hand holding Brenner's. She looked like she had used her powers today and used them as much as she could at any given time but on seeing me she lit up and my heart unlocked. I smiled seeing the plate of Eggos on her lap and the syrup they were covered in. I thought she'd never looked prettier than she did now in her nightgown with her hair still in pins but her face showing the exhaustion after proving how extraordinary she was.

I looked at Brenner and he looked just like I did: ready to drop to his knees at her feet if that would make her better. But we both stood firm and awaited her word. I took her other hand that wasn't clasped in Brenner's.

“Mike,” she said and I kissed her forehead like I had seen in a few movies. I hoped I’d done it right.

“What did you get into today?” I asked her. I didn’t know exactly what you could do with powers like hers when your life wasn’t being threatened by either a monster or crazy government agencies. I also knew that El’s powers were very diverse if that was the right word to use.

“Sister, I saw her. Pretty. She’s gone. The bad men killed her. On my birthday.” I definitely did not see that one coming at all it’s like some Luke and Leia stuff going on I thought.

“What was her name?” I asked.

“Maggie. She’s in the other place, bright and happy with mountains, Mike.”

Eleven

Ray who worked at my house said dinner was ready I don’t know how much longer. I told Mike about Sister Maggie and how nice she was to me when we talked. I still wasn’t myself yet fully from talking with Sister Maggie but I didn’t mind because my favorite people were with me.

As Papa carried me to the dining room, Mike asked if I wanted to go to Valentine’s dance at his school, and I said yes. “It’s like the Snow Ball we have in the winter but for Valentines,” he said.

“What is Valentines?” I asked him and Papa, unfamiliar. “Good thing?”

“It’s a day to tell your friends you love them,” Mike said, “And for candy if you like that. I like candy so that’s the best part to me.”

“I say love you all the time to you and Papa, Mike,” I said as Papa set me in a chair by Mike, “Love you, Papa,” I said to show. He smiled and kissed my forehead, nice.

“I love you, El Brenner.”

Martin Brenner

After a dinner of El’s favorites, Michael Wheeler wished her well and he’d see her soon as he left. It was late for a school night for the children and El was quite tired herself. The house was quiet as the staff had left it to El and me, trusting me to take care of her and get her things like water should she need. As I carried her to her room, her head on my shoulder she looked at me with her brown eyes. “Papa?”

“Yes, El?”

“You stay with me. Can you? Alone is scary sometimes. Bad dreams,” I was unaware of the extent of her post-traumatic stress and I felt like that might be another failure of mine in my quest to show her a life of privilege that she deserved and my duty to take care of her. My degrees were being wasted in that I wasn’t using my training to help her. She'd never open up to a psychologist, she didn’t trust just anyone.

“Of course,” I said opening her door and pulling back her covers to tuck her in and put pillows behind her head. I pulled up a chair from her desk in the room and took her hand. “Will you explain to me, El?”

“Bad men, dark tanks,” she said reaching out all the while gripping my hand. In the moonlight, I could trace the tears on her face and I couldn’t help but wonder if I was one of the bad men that haunted her in her dreams, if not the main one. Even though I had been pardoned by her that didn’t mean that her dreams were free of memories. Taking her in my arms and wrapping her in the blanket at the bed’s foot I did not dare press her as El Brenner cried herself to sleep and all I could do was softly comfort her in vain.

8. Come On, Eleven

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi all!
>
> This chapter was a lot of fun because now we get to see Mike's boys give him crap about loving Eleven which is fun to write since they're all so young. Also, like Aboo19 and I were saying Mike's love is so sweet but also kind of tragic (because I think personally she wants to love Mike and does but her trauma is so deep before she commits she needs to sort her own things out). Anyway, keep the hits coming and if you have any suggestions/thoughts comment away!

Chapter 8- Come On, Eleven
February 21, 1984

Eleven

I had no bad dreams last night.

I woke up in the morning to sunshine on my face and warm in blankets but still in the chair with Papa, my head on his shoulder. I didn't want to move. He knew I was awake but he didn't disturb me. His hand rested on the crown of my head and I looked up at him and smiled. "I had a good sleep. No dreams of bad men. I thought so because I talked about them but no. No wound. Not festering.'

"No," he said, "There's not a physical wound, but a mental one," he touched my forehead. However, I had a point to make:

"I bled that one time, and you said I will again Papa remember? Is that wound? You said I can't control wound. Festering."

"No, El, that's not a wound. It's just something that's going to happen sometimes that I'm going to take care of for you," he said but I wasn't reassured. I'd been so scared I was dying.

"But mind wound?"

“That’s why we went to the psychologist.”

“I don’t like them. Don’t talk to them,” I said, “You can be a psychologist for me, Papa.”

“I know,” he said, “And if I could, I would. I’m not trained to but I can try to help.”

“Trained?”

“You have to go to school to do the things I do, El. I went to school back in the 1950s to get trained to do medicine and scientific research. If you want to be a psychologist you do different school.”

“Oh,” I said, “This gown is beautiful.” I wasn’t sure of the material but it was softer than my old hospital gown and with no dots on it, just plain white and beautiful. “It makes me feel beautiful like Sister. She is beautiful.’

“You both are,” he said, “The most beautiful teenagers to live in Hawkins.”

“Does Mike think so too?”

“It would be a shame if he didn’t.”

Mike Wheeler

“Do you like El?” Dustin asked me as I shut my locker as we were about to head to social studies. “You missed AV Club and you’re the president. You’ve never missed AV Club.” Damn, he had a point and I had no explanation because it was well known that I was at El’s last night. Lucas looked at me, knowing Dustin got me.

“You do! Yes, you do!” he said.

“Shut up.”

“Mike and El sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g,” Will sang like we were in elementary school. I thought back to last night and kissing El on her

forehead, hoping I didn't turn red to reveal it to the guys. I had never thought about actually kissing El again but now with Will singing the stupid song how could I not? I mean, she was pretty and cool and I did like her. But what if she didn't want to kiss me? Then I would feel horrible.

"Did you ask her to the Valentine Dance this weekend?" Lucas asked, shushing Will.

"Yeah."

"And what'd she say?"

"She said yes."

Notes for the Chapter:

> Also, for my friend Aboo19: little tidbit that will be important later that I want to state now. Brenner's first language was not English but German.

9. Every Breath You Take

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi all!
>
> So this chapter was a really interesting one since El has to see a psychologist to help her out with PTSD but of course in true El fashion, she doesn't take to him that well. But if you read the chapter can you blame her? Brenner's not too happy either and protective as can be. You be the judge of the psychologist's character.
> Anyway drop by a kudos or better yet a comment with thoughts!

Chapter 9- Every Breath You Take
February 21, 1984

Martin Brenner

Today El and I went to her psychologist, which I knew she hated, but it was a necessary evil. I let El still wear her nightdress since usually they had her change into a hospital gown and she shut down. Usually, they monitored her brain waves while they talked to her but last time we had gone, Owens, her head psychologist had suggested electrotherapy. I wasn't too keen on the idea, having flashbacks of what Terry Ives had gone through the last time I'd been present at such a treatment.

Owens, however, had assured me we would put El under anesthesia (or else I would've flatly refused to consent to this for her). He suggested we try this first rather than save it as a last resort treatment after medications failed so we could make sure the medications had more of a chance of helping El recover. Owens was always sweet to El like he knew she didn't want to be there and that comforted her a bit.

"Princess Jane," he said when we walked in smiling at her, "I heard you just had a birthday with Eggos. Fun?"

“Yes,” El said as I sat with her on my lap in the chair, one of the only ways we had figured out that she would not panic and use her powers as defenses, “Got pictures of mama and pretty dress and Eggos.”

“We’ll give you more Eggos after this,” Owens promised her as he stuck the little electrodes on her head.

Eleven

The little sticky things on my head scared me. I gripped at Papa almost expecting a hit but no, just sweet. “El,” he said rubbing my back and putting my head on his shoulder. I saw him hold something in his other hand. “I will kill him if he hurts you,” he said softly into my hair but I knew he was not lying. Friends don’t lie. I knew Owens had worked for Papa and like Ray at our house he was afraid of Papa.

I nodded. “Look here, El,” Papa said and I did, “What I’m holding makes you fall asleep. It doesn’t hurt you,” as it lowered onto my nose I gripped at Papa’s shoulder again and I was met with only sweet again. “No,” Papa snapped at Owens, not me, “She won’t trust you.” He was right, I didn’t. As I found myself slipping I did so knowing that Papa had killed a man once I thought and if Owens disobeyed Papa he might become the second or I don’t know what number man Papa killed. I wondered if I could ask Sister Maggie. I bet Papa killed who killed her.

I opened my eyes in the pretty place with the mountains. I had on my flower crown and found Sister Maggie sitting there too. I took a seat by her and she smiled giving me a hug, “Hi, El. I missed you. How are you and Papa?”

“Good,” I said, “Did Papa kill the bad men who killed you?”

She nodded, “Tortured them, killed them. It was wrong, but he did. He would do that for you, you know, but if he considers it you have to tell him no.”

“No? He said he’d kill Owens if he had to,” I told her.

“If this Owens wronged you, he would. But you have to say no. It’s not right.”

“Okay. I will say no.”

Sam Owens

To say I was terrified of Martin Brenner would be a gross understatement.

After Jane Brenner had succumbed to the anesthetic I didn’t dare move her to the table where the machine was set up, moving a pace behind Brenner who carried her like the most precious glass vase. Laying her down I offered him a blanket to put over her, “Nothing over 300. You will not lay a hand on her,” he instructed me.

“Of course not Dr. Brenner,” I said wishing to please him desperately. The rumors of what Brenner had done to those scientists that had killed his biological daughter got around in the years of Hawkins Lab and the things I knew made even my skin crawl a bit. I found myself acquiescing to him, letting him lead the procedure as I stood at Jane’s shoulder, the sound of the heart rate monitor Brenner had insisted upon to monitor Jane ringing in my ears.

When she came out of it, I rushed to put pillows behind her head and take the sticky electrode pads off her head delicately. Brenner had her sip on water as she opened her eyes. “Fester,” she said.

“No,” Brenner’s voice was barely audible to me, “We’re going home soon, El.”

10. Hazy

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi guys!
>
> Sorry, this is late! As an apology, I can upload two chapters as I've hit a spark of inspiration for later happenings to sweet El Brenner. I love how Mike and Brenner come to some kind of understanding in this chapter that makes them have a respect for each other.
>
> Anyway, here is chapter 10 and I'd love it if y'all would drop by a comment or kudos to tell me what you think! I'd love that!

Chapter 10- Hazy
February 21, 1984
Mike Wheeler

“You let them do that to her?’ I always knew there was something about Brenner that had unsettled me from the second I’d first seen him last year. Riding over to El’s house again (this time without AV Club hanging over my head like a lightsaber). I had found El laying on the couch, a bowl of potato soup by her.

“Wheeler, I was prepared to take Sam Owens life if he took even one misstep with her,” he said and that made me freeze. I could easily see Brenner killing someone and even now kneeling at El’s side speaking to me I could see him throwing someone to the wall hard enough to kill them. But now Brenner and I were in solidarity watching over El, Brenner not letting me touch her but still, he let me be here so I guess I was grateful.

“How often do they do that to her?” I asked.

“We’ll determine how she’s responding and then figure out something,” he said as El woke up from sleeping. She’d been asleep since I’d come over. I kissed her forehead again and she smiled.

“Mike. Papa. Never let Owens do again.”

“He didn’t touch you, El. I wouldn’t let him,” Brenner said, “That was me to help you.”

“Help me.”

Eleven

“80,” Papa said as he held my hand, counting something. I wondered what it was as his hand in mine was warm and comforting. Mike was kneeling beside me just like Papa like how Papa said Ray who worked for us should if I wanted him to. Mike smiled when I looked at him.

“What counting?” I asked Papa.

“Your pulse, El. It’s what tells me you’re alive,” he said and I understood that word. “We want to make sure what I did helped you.”

“Sister Maggie told me to tell you no to hurting Owens,” I told Papa, “She says wrong.” Papa kissed my forehead.

“As long as he doesn’t do anything to hurt you, I have no reason to hurt him,” he said but I knew maybe like Sister Maggie had that Papa had his own definitions for these terms. Owens was not anywhere as tall or strong as Papa and I don’t think he’d stand a chance against whatever torture Papa had for him. Papa sat me up and gave me a bite of the soup, “When we go see him I will be there with you.”

“Hurt him?” I didn’t want him to, but he knew I didn’t trust Owens even though he was nice to me and gave me Eggos.

“Only if he hurts you,” Papa said kissing my forehead.

Martin Brenner

I ended up staying with El in the same chair as we had last night. She didn't want to be alone and I wouldn't dare do that as I didn't trust Owens at all even though I knew he was afraid of me. I bathed El and changed her into another gown; the concept of shame of her body was never taught to her so she let me bathe and change her clothes for her. Her little ribs were still visible from her pale skin and now the voice inside my head was not Maggie's but mine: Look what you did to her.

Getting El to her room I put her in the chair with me, wrapping her in blankets and using the chair to rock us back and forth. "Tomorrow we don't go back there and we dance again. To 'Come on Eileen,'" she insisted, "What dances when you were little like the moonwalk."

'When I was your age, swing dancing was popular. I'll teach you," I said, her dark hair burying into me.

"If there are more of those things like today…"

"I'll handle it, El.'

And I'd kill Owens if I knew I had to.

11. Her Royal Highness Jane Eleven Brenner, Electress of Hawkins, Indiana

Notes for the Chapter:

> This chapter is such a sweet one since the Brenners are officially a unit now. And Martin Brenner can finally begin El's real journey to healing. The first thing she needed was a family and he's given her that. Can't wait to see where this takes them!
>
> As always, definitely leave feedback! I'd so love it!

Chapter 11- El Brenner, Electress of Hawkins
February 24, 1984

Eleven

Today was a good day, Papa said. I didn't have to go to Owens, which made it an already perfect day for me. Ray made me Eggos and I was dressed pretty. The only bad thing about today was that I was bleeding again when I woke up but Papa was smart and could take care of it for me by putting something inside me he said would help. I didn't feel weird about it, he was trained to do such things. He said to him the body was just like a machine that worked in ways like that. "A machine? Work well?"

"Yes, yours works perfectly El."

Today Papa said we would become the Brenners since he signed papers. As he was putting a purple clip in my hair that had feathers on it he said, "Do you know what that means, El?" He knelt down and gave me his hand.

"Friends," I said.

"Family," he corrected, "It means I will watch out for you and love you like you know I loved Sister Maggie."

"Forever?" I asked.

“Yes forever.”

I had decided I wanted another name besides Jane, a middle name Papa said that would go on the papers. I chose Eleven since that was the name I liked best. The paper place was in town and I felt important walking the streets dressed up nice holding Papa’s hand. I wondered if the princess I’d seen felt like this. The adoption people were sweet to me but sometimes said some things I didn’t fully understand.

A picture was taken where Papa was holding me up on his shoulders and I loved that. I wanted a copy for my room to show Mike, Lucas, Will, and Dustin. Maybe I could bring it to Sister Maggie next time I dreamed her. “I love you, Papa.”

“Eleven, you have made me the luckiest papa in the world.”

“Can I be like a princess, Papa?”

“You are.”

Martin Brenner

The day I adopted El was a tie for the happiest day I had lived along with the day Maggie was born. With the sun shining I could tell she was all behind my choice to give El the life she deserved with the most respected name in this town. I found myself planning trips to show her more to this world than Hawkins: to Germany and Switzerland to show her where the Brenner ancestors had come from, the Alps, all over Europe, to see her mother. To Washington where I’d spent most of my life.

“Happiest day,” El said,”Favorite day. Even more than meeting Mike,” that comment truly meant something considering Wheeler was El’s very best companion. “Better than dance. Mike asked me. I said yes. But need a dress. Dance Saturday.”

“We will get you the finest dress, Jane Eleven Brenner, my liebling.” I promised her, knowing what this milestone meant to her. She looked at me wondering what the word I’d just used meant. “It means

sweetheart in another language," I said, "In German, what they speak in Switzerland."

"Like the war? You fight Papa?"

"No, I was too young. My father, your Opa now, fought for America. We had some relatives who lived over in Europe who fought for Germany."

"Bad?"

"I don't think so, El. Just not on the right side," as I said it I felt El's heart beat against my shoulder and I found myself counting the beats. If anyone could understand just how misguided some of my Swiss relatives were during the War it was me.

"You on the right side," El smiled, "Not like bad men. I knew it."

12. The Swiss Brenners

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi guys!
>
> So the research for this fic has been so much fun. Like I had no idea that Brenner was a Swiss family name, and that led me to figure out some major plot points! Now with El officially Papa's daughter I know he's going to give her a very Swiss influenced life. Anyway, hope you all are still liking it! Remember to keep up the kudos and comments!

Chapter 12- The Swiss Brenners
Flashback, circa 1953
Martin Brenner

When I was eighteen I had decided to go to college for biology and then go on to medical school. Mother had been a nurse during the War years and with Father's long career as a surgeon science came naturally to me and as the only child and son, it was almost my legacy to carry this on. But I also wanted to distinguish myself from my parents so I decided to go for a degree higher than my father.

Georgetown University in '53 was another logical step for me. Having been educated in Washington's finest private academies all my life and my science and mathematics grades top of my class it seemed like my talent could go anywhere. As a pre-medical student at the beginning of this Cold War much of the curriculum focused on how the United States had to produce superior scientists and doctors than the Russians.

There were labs being set up to conduct research all over the country at this time. There were labs in big cities and even in small towns no one would even give a second glance to since these locations were so remote and nothing happened in these suburban communities with white picket fence houses. I hadn't imagined at eighteen that I would end up anywhere but a big city where my family name was well known, never would've seen myself move to small-town Indiana. But

at eighteen if I had known what I knew thirty-one years later I might have stayed in Washington but then again I might have done it the same all over again.

Eleven
Present, February 24, 1984

On our way home “Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go” came on the radio and I sang the words I knew from listening to the song so much on my mixtape. “Papa, we should go somewhere new sometime,” I said.

“Where would you like to go, El? Indianapolis to a city? Or to see our ancestral family home in Zurich in Switzerland? We can go there.”

“Live there?”

“I bet we could,” Papa said, “The Brenner family estate is a small castle and no one lives there full time. I used to go as a child since Switzerland was safe during the War.”

“Oh Papa, let’s go! After dance Saturday.”

“We will look into going. The Swiss have better psychological services than America,” he said mostly to himself. I hoped Swiss people were sweet like Papa since he was part Swiss. I looked at him.

“Psychological?”

“For your mind.”

“Wound festering,” I said, “Can they stop it better than Owens?”

“They probably could.”

Martin Brenner

I took El to the library to find books on Switzerland that would have pictures to show her of the Alps, Zurich where we were from ancestrally, and other Swiss things. “How do we get there?” she

asked me as we looked through a travel book.

“On a machine that flies us there,” I said, “One just for us.”

“Are there other Brenners in Switzerland? Family? We meet them,” she said. The only family I knew of in Switzerland were extended relatives I’d never met myself and we had family in Berlin. “Would they like me? Oh look, Papa,” she pointed at the mountains, “Like where Maggie is. Pretty.”

“We will go see the mountains,” I told her, “And we will have some of the finest chocolate in the world that they have there.”

“I send Mike letters.”

13. At This Moment, You Mean Everything

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi all!
>
> Sorry for this delay but I'm back! Ab0019, here is your pre-Switzerland chapter! This is the Valentine Dance and we meet Max which is so fun since she's so sassy!
>
> As always I love kudos but comments are the bomb since I can have conversations with my lovely readers! Much love!

Chapter 13- At This Moment, You Mean Everything
February 25, 1984

Dustin Henderson

I really didn't get why Mike was making me, Lucas, and Will come to this stupid dance when he could just go with Eleven alone. None of us had dates and if you ask me we'd look like losers sitting on the bleachers in the gym alone. My mom, however, was behind the idea so much so she went out and bought me a new suit. "Mom it's no big deal," I'd tried to tell her but no, a new suit and many pictures ensued.

"This is dumb," Lucas said as we walked in looking for Mike, "I think dances are lame."

"Same, man," I agreed. Will sighed from behind me.

"You guys want to ditch and see if Mr. Clarke left the door to the AV room unlocked?" he asked. Honestly, that sounded better than just sitting around. I nodded, signaling I was in. I was waiting for Lucas to solidify the plan but he was far too transfixed looking at a girl I'd never seen before but her fire red hair made her seem even more new.

Shit, I thought, now we've lost two party members! Girls are the

worst.

Eleven

Papa said I looked beautiful in my baby blue dress that had flower patterns lining the skirt and white shoes. My hair had been done in a pretty braid and I had a headband on that looked like the flower crown in my dreams. He let Ray drive me to the middle school where the dance was. “You look very nice, Miss Jane.”

“Thank you,” I said before getting out of the car. Tonight the stars were sparkling and it was just cold enough for me to wear one of my lighter but heavier coats. Walking in people looked at me because they’d never seen me before but I smiled at them, just looking for Mike. I hoped he’d think I was pretty, I saw him as I walked into the big room following some other kids and his jaw dropped. I wondered if that was a good thing or not. His jaw closed and he smiled at me.

“You’re beautiful, El,” he reached out his hand to me and I took his hand. The lights in the big room were flashing and many kids were dancing, but not in a way I knew how. “Do you want to dance?”

“Yes. Thank you,” I said as I followed him. I wondered why they weren’t playing the kind of music Papa and I liked to dance to, jazz he had called it. It had been popular during the War when he grew up. They were playing “Don’t Stop Believing” - a song I knew from the radio. Mike took my hand and we started to move. “Nice,” I said.

“Yeah, I guess. I wonder where Dustin and Will are. Lucas saw the new girl and I think he’s going to ask her to dance.”

“New girl?”

“She has red hair, I don’t know her name. I think she moved from San Francisco or something,” Mike said, “I bet Lucas likes her.”

“Do you like anyone?” I asked.

“You, El.”

Max Mayfield

I hated wearing dresses honestly, it was so dumb. I didn't know how to walk in them and it made me feel out of place even though Mom had insisted I wear one. I don't get why she'd made me go to this thing, it wasn't like I was going to talk to anyone anyway. I'd save being the new girl for Monday, thanks, Mom. But here I was.

One of the kids I'd seen sitting on the bleachers bored as hell like me stood up and came my way. Dammit. He was dressed in a suit and his dark eyes met mine as he came up, "I'm Lucas Sinclair. Are you new here?"

"Yeah," I said.

"So, you've got a name, right?"

"Yeah," I said again.

"Are you going to tell me what it is?"

"Depends. I'm guessing you came over here to ask me to dance considering we're at a dance and all. You'll chicken out of it I bet because you'll start asking me questions after I tell you my name so don't chicken out. Then I will."

"Do you, uh, want to dance?"

"Why not, Sinclair?"

Mike Wheeler

As I held El she looked at me and smiled, "Guess what? I have family in Switzerland that I might go see," she said. I didn't know El had any family of her own at all but she could also now be talking about Brenner's family. I had seen it printed in the newspaper this morning that El had been adopted by Brenner, something I was still unsure about but as long as he made her happy I guess it was okay. "Have

you been Switzerland?"

"I once went to Florida to the beach," I offered, "Never been out of the country."

"Me neither. Papa says there are nicer psychologists in Switzerland. I don't like the Hawkins ones. They worked for Bad Men." Bad men like Brenner I couldn't help but think.

"When do you leave?" I asked, wanting to savor these numbered minutes if I never was to see her again.

"Soon maybe."

14. Electress Eleven's First Flight

Notes for the Chapter:

> I figured I'd want to post the beginning of the Switzerland arc so here's a bonus chapter! This arc has been my absolute favorite so far so I hope you guys love it as much as I do! We also meet Luca Freund, El's Swiss psychologist and I promise he's better to her than Owens was. She deserves the best, and Brenner knows it. Also... Brenner may or may not have killed Owens so there's that...

Chapter 14- Electress Eleven's First Flight
March 1, 1984

Eleven

To go to Switzerland I was dressed in a dress with a white top and a silver skirt. My coat was black and I had on warm silver boots. Papa said we'd be in the air for 11 hours and he had brought me my Walkman that played my mixtape Mike had made for me and then another one Ray had given me with songs he told me were popular in the 1930s up to the 1950s.

Taking off was kind of scary since sometimes we'd drop a little bit and then go back up. My stomach hit my toe every time and my hand in Papa's felt sweaty. "It's alright, El," he said, "We're just trying to get above the clouds." I decided I liked flying, but the bumps scared me and made me feel weird so Papa gave me something to swallow with my Eggos and then I was calm, kind of sleepy. I was able to sit reclined by one of the windows and they served me saffron risotto Papa said was popular in Switzerland. I loved watching the sky get progressively darker out.

When it was time to go to sleep, Papa carried me to the room with a pretty bed. He gave me another medicine to calm me down with water and put the covers around me as my head sank back onto the pillow. As I went to sleep I had but one goal in mind, to not let the medicine make me let go of Papa's hand.

Martin Brenner

Eleven slept well through the night, partially due to the Librium I had injected after she'd fallen asleep. I kept watch over her, she had us tethered together with her hand locked in mine. Freund, the leading psychologist practicing in Zurich, would be expecting us upon landing in the morning.

As the hours passed and dawn approached I came to know I was doing the right thing for Eleven. If we had stayed in Hawkins it was very possible I would've killed everyone who'd hurt El there and I'd clearly spent too much time fantasizing about beating them to death slowly. Although, their fear of me made them so sweet to the girl who deserved adoration.

Touching down in Zurich we had a car pick us up from the airport and El woke up. "Papa?" she asked but was mesmerized by the Swiss city as the morning light came over it. "Beautiful."

"Welcome to Switzerland, liebling," I said to her and her face lighting up lit up my heart with love for her. "We are going to go see someone called Freund. He's not like Owens, there will be no treatments while you're asleep, El. He just wants to meet you."

"He knows about powers?" she asked.

"He does, but he will not hurt you, Jane Eleven. Do you think I'd let anyone hurt you?"

"No," she said, "Maggie said no hurt."

Luca Freund

Jane, or Eleven as she strangely asked me to call her, was quite the skittish little thing. I let her sit on Brenner's lap facing the window so she could look out at the Alps. "Your family is from here?" I asked her, knowing the answer but I wanted to start to get her talking and trusting me. "I bet the estate waiting on you has many Eggos," she

smiled and squeezed the hand she had in mine. At the mention of Eggos I got the hint of a smile and then a glance at the plate in her lap where Eggos had just been, “More for you, Miss Eleven? Jan can get them for you.”

“Yes. Thank you,” she said and I sent Jan off. “What you do to me?”

“Just talk,” I said softly, “To get to know you.”

“Like a friend?”Her big brown eyes focused on me and in them, I could already see so much. I saw her grip at Brenner, who quietly reassured her.

“Exactly. I know that the psychologists in America were nice but you didn’t really like what they did.”

“Scared me,” she said. “Papa doesn’t trust Owens. Thinks Owens will hurt me.”

15. Dream Girls

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hey everyone!
>
> Here's the next installment in El's lavish life. We're in Switzerland and now I promise she'll start to get the help she needs. I don't think Freund would be that bold to try anything like Owens did as we saw,
>
> Anyway, enjoy as usual and drop by some kudos and comments!

Chapter 15- Dream Girls
March 2, 1984

Eleven

My room in Switzerland was like back home, but the view was better. The walls were gold like the covers on the bed and there were people there to wait on me (not like Ray, more). I had a button by my bed that could bring them or Papa to me. Inge was my favorite since she was so sweet and would bring Eggos.

This morning I had my Eggos and some tea that was made locally. Inge and Papa made me pretty in a yellow dress with my hair in two braids. “You look very Swiss, Miss Eleven.”

“Freund is sweet,” I told Papa, “Not like Owens. He won’t put stickies on my head for the machine.”

“No, El. He’d never do that, I wouldn’t let him.”

“Scared Owens was going to make me go to the bath like the Bad Men. Dreamed it once,” I don’t know what made me think about it, maybe it was just sitting in the warm bath that had stirred something even as the door was open and I knew I was safe with Inge and Papa. Papa took my face in his hands.

“When did you dream this? Recently?”

“Last night,” I buried myself in his arms.

“Eleven,” he said softly, not punishing, “I need you to tell me these things. So I can help you.”

“Freund no put me in a tank? Promise?”

“I will make him swear on his life,” It was something I knew Maggie would disapprove of, but I was so weary of men like Freund and I needed Papa to protect me.

Martin Brenner

I carried a skittish El outside to sit on the swing we had out back that had a view of the Alps. As we swung she sat against me and I didn’t pressure her to talk. “Nightmares,” she said, “Of that machine that hooked up to head. Slipping. Unsure. Scared. Sound like electricity. And then tank. Dark, No one there. Owens laughing like Bad Men.”

I knew I did right in killing that son of a bitch when I had the chance when El was asleep under anesthesia. I only regretted not using that syringe I kept on my belt, loaded with a lethal dose of Phenol, making its way into his neck, his corpse hitting the ground before his undeserving hands laid on El’s head. I’d covered up plenty of deaths in my Hawkins stint but this one was my greatest victory. Even Maggie was silent in my head because she knew revenge was the one thing I might not be talked out of.

Freund, without the scars of the medical generation that had produced the likes of Owens and me, was a good and talented young man for certain but my rules did need to be established. And I would not let him test El for anything until she consented. Looking at her I now felt the overwhelming shame that this was caused by another decision of mine.

But she didn’t see the sin, she saw comfort in me. Holding her as her breathing slowed down and as she looked at the mountains I swore to never play on her fear again.

Lucas Sinclair

Today I was going to ask Max to eat lunch with us.

“Hell no,” Dustin said, “No girls in the party, just us. I can’t have you and Mike both lose your shit over a girl.” I sighed, and technically now that Eleven was in Europe I would be the one involved with a girl who was close by.

“It’s one lunch man,” I said, “Max seemed cool when I danced with her at the dance.”

“Mental,” he said shaking his head. I looked at Will and Mike, my face asking for backup. Mike spoke up:

“I don’t see why not. Will?”

“Sure,” Will shrugged his shoulders and Dustin sighed, knowing he’d been outnumbered in his plight. “Go ask her,” Will said, “We’ll be in our usual place.”

16. Caught in a Trap

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here's the next installment since this chapter is one of the sweetest thus far I think. As always, kudos and comments keep me going!

Chapter 16- Caught in a Trap
March 2, 1984

Luca Freund

Coming to Oase Estate with a warm Belgian waffle from the local bakery for little Miss Eleven it was a beautiful Swiss morning, the Alps being shone on by the sun as if to exalt them. The maid answered the large estate's door and led me inside. "Miss Eleven will be ready in a moment, Dr. Brenner has said."

I was not kept waiting as Brenner descended the stairs, Miss Eleven ahead of him like a true gentleman of the era he was raised in and the traditional German influenced Swiss respect of her status as a little woman, higher than him for obvious reasons of superiority, was apparent. Miss Eleven was dressed like a true princess: in a flowing dress with her hair immaculate but her face natural to keep her youth known.

"Do you remember me?" I asked, kneeling on one knee to greet her at the bottom of the steps. Brenner stood over her like a father hawk. She gave a skittish smile.

"Freund," she said.

"Yes," I said reaching for the Belgian waffle, "Look what I have. It's like an Eggo but better. See, the sugar on it makes it very sweet."

"Thank you."

Martin Brenner

El happily ate the treat Freund had brought her in the kitchen with tea Inge had made. I sat beside her, the syringe on my belt loaded with enough Phenol to kill Freund in an instant visible to him as if to subtly get my message across like I had failed to with Owens. “Yum,” El said finishing her waffle, “Just like Eggo but sweeter. No syrup.”

“I can bring you as many as you like,” Freund said. “I’ve come to talk with you today just to get to know you.”

“Get to know?”

“Become friends. Have you ever had a Swiss friend? I have a son younger than you, he’s very little just born named Alessio and he might like to know an American. He only has met Swiss people.”

“Papa is Swiss,’ she said, “Swiss-German. Had family fight in the War, my Opa now although I don’t know him. I want to meet him. He heals Americans.” To have her quickly learn the history of my father and repeat it to Freund was incredible and a testament to her unique intellect but to hear her refer to my father as her ‘Opa’ overshadowed that immensely. Her comment also held the irony that she did not understand: for my nickname at the Lab had been ‘The Reichsfuhrer” -an allusion to Himmler’s title.

“My family was not in the War. Switzerland stayed out.”

“Why?”

“To protect ourselves,” he said gently. “Shall we go sit outside and look at the mountains? Do you draw at all, Miss Eleven?”

“Yes, but also dance. ‘Walking After Midnight.’” El’s fascination with Patsy Cline’s singing and her picture had made her one of her idolized ‘pretty’ ladies she loved. “Papa and I dance,” She had also acquired a fascination for Elvis.

“Then we shall dance,” I said.

We went outside, Freund carrying the boombox from my room with him. He put in my mixtape of the 1930s to 50s songs I liked and I wanted to hear the Benny Goodman song, which was first on the tape. Papa took my hand and started twirling me and I saw what looked like a needle cased on his belt in a sort of holster like a gun. “What’s that?” I whispered but I felt I knew.

“Nothing that will be used on our Swiss friend if all goes well,” he said picking me up and twirling me. I knew I couldn’t stop him when he was determined so I wished Freund to be good. He was nice so far and hadn’t put anything on me. “No on me,” I said to Papa.

“He won’t lay a hand on you unless your permission has been granted.” The song switched to Patsy Cline and our dance slowed down. “You’re a little 30’s baby, El. You would’ve loved it then.”

“For next birthday we celebrate 30s theme.”

“It will be the essence of the 1930s.”

“1930s party now?” I looked at Papa and Freund, “Can we?”

“You must be dressed for it,” Papa said, “Come. We will have you transformed into a beautiful time capsule,” he looked at Freund, commanding him to stay, my leg resting not far from the very thing that could bury him.

Notes for the Chapter:

> I also love that this chapter gave us insight into Brenner's father, El's Opa Siegfried who we meet later! I love establishing the Brenner history. Also, if the Duffers don't use this history for him if they bring Brenner back what's even the point?

17. Scars of the 1930s

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hello!
>
> Ab0019 and my other lovelies guess what: I decided this is going to have to be two parts so that means a series! I finished this installment today so I'll be posting often so now I can be up to speed with you guys. Not gonna lie the ending of this first one shocked me so there's that to look forward to. But for now let's enjoy Switzerland, shall we?
>
> As always, drop by a kudo or comment to keep me going! Feedback is my jam.

Chapter 17- Scars of the 1930s
March 2, 1984

Inge

Dr. Brenner summoned me to change Miss Eleven into a golden dress I found in the closet. Miss Eleven loved changing her clothes, which she had a walk-in closet full of. “Inge, it’s a 1930s party,” she said. “I love the 1930s. You can come! You are a friend.”

“I will,” I said, zipping her dress for her, “Thank you for inviting me,’ I sat her back in the chair so Dr. Brenner could put her hair up in a classic waterfall. “Did you know about the Depression in America then?’

“Papa said the Brenners weren’t involved,” she said. This didn’t surprise me because there was no way a family owning a small castle as this was could lose it all after a single market crash. It was impossible. The Swiss banks secured the ungodly Brenner wealth. “I don’t know if Mama’s mama was.” Miss Eleven had mentioned her Mama a lot but I hadn’t an idea where she was.

“She was, liebling,” Dr. Brenner told her.

“Oh. And Mama?”

“Mama wasn’t born until later, in 1953.”

“What were you doing in 1953, Papa? School to help me?”

Martin Brenner

El looked like Depression-era girl who didn’t know what the word depression meant to America. While she looked elite, the concept was not one she knew but she knew beauty. “Shall we, liebling?” I asked, picking her up, the loaded syringe encased on my belt far from her skin. Inge followed behind.

“Did they teach about what’s in the needle in your school?” she asked, her voice low but curious. Not encouraging nor condemning but curious to know. “Is that like what put me to sleep on plane?”

“There’s a difference,” I said kissing her forehead, “Maybe one day you decide to go to school to learn it.”

“No, Papa, I go to school to learn dancing and the 1930s.” And if she wanted to study dance and the historical events I had lived, so she would. Getting to the bottom of the stairs Freund started the music for us, “He trying to win favor with this?”

“Do you believe so?” I was eager to hear her case and consider it. Eleven’s sense of people and caution about them and who she let close, into her party, was remarkable. And I was accepted into the party to protect the leader with my life. If she said yes I would have ushered Freund out, his life spared because of the absence of Eleven’s absolute two words: ‘Hurt me.’

“Don’t know. He’s not like you. Not as smart. Smarter than Owens, and didn’t hurt me yet.” As we reached the bottom of the grand stairs I put El on her feet. She turned first to me because she knew nothing I’d do would hurt her.

Eleven

Papa and I twirled around the long hallway from the door to the stairs. I couldn't stop smiling as I imagined myself as a little girl who went to places and danced the night away while bands played like this. I wondered if Mike had heard of the big bands that played these songs before and thought tomorrow I will ask in a letter.

Freund came up and bowed his hand to me. I considered a moment before taking the Swissman's hand to dance. "You look very elegant, Miss Eleven." I didn't know that word and maybe it showed on my face. From the corner of my eye, I saw Papa about three steps from me, close enough to reach my hand out if Freund scared me.

"Pretty and classic," he clarified. I smiled.

"I'm sorry," I told him, "Trusting is hard." I really had no idea why this came out now but I figured he ought to know. If he wanted to get close he needed to be prepared. I was still a broken one. It would take me a long time to trust him and I'd never trust him like Papa.

"That's all right," he said, not judging but nice, "I figured. We will work on it."

"No machines. No."

"What sorts of machines?" he wasn't pressing just curious as he spun me. I couldn't find the right words.

"Shock," I said. 'Owens convinced Papa.'

Luca Freund

Brenner came forward right as Miss Eleven revealed more to me and I figured that her traumas ran deeper than the information Brenner had told me about her childhood. Brenner picked her up as Miss Eleven started to shudder. I had no idea who Owens was but the fact he would've suggested shock therapy on a child disturbed me immeasurably. I would hope any good doctor in Europe had gotten the Nazi experimentation methods far from their thought processes in

these 40 years.

I shut off the music and sent the woman maid into the kitchen for tea. I was careful to not touch Miss Eleven in the case she associated me with the American Owens due to similar roles in her life, which could very well happen. Brenner led us to a sitting room and sat on the couch, me beside him. Miss Eleven still trembling.

I reached into the bag I'd brought to find some Valium, loaded in a syringe because it did not seem to me like little Miss Eleven would know to swallow a pill, but not to her fault. Of course, I wasn't qualified to give it to her, just prescribe it so I yielded to Brenner's superior medical training. "Hold Papa's hand, Eleven," he said almost below my hearing. She obeyed him and I distracted her. Her shaking stopped as Brenner pulled the syringe out.

"Stupid," Miss Eleven said, "Me."

"No,' Brenner said, "You've just got a mental wound, liebling, and that's all right."

Notes for the Chapter:

> Also, Freund is the sweetest. I bet he and El become closer now that she knows he's different (hint hint)

18. (Not) Playing Games

Notes for the Chapter:

> As the chapter title notes, Brenner does not play games unless the game is taking the lives of those who hurt his loved ones. In that case, he wins. Every. Time.
>
> Anyway, drop by some feedback!

Chapter 18- (Not) Playing Games
March 4, 1984

Max Mayfield

I sat with Lucas, Mike, Will, and Dustin at lunch all this week. Dustin and Will liked to make fun of Lucas for his obvious smittenness with me and sometimes I joined in, to bust his chops. As I was picking at pizza Mike introduced the plans for the weekend. “Guys,” Mike said, “We should go to the arcade this weekend. Do you play video games, Max?”

‘Yeah,” I said, “I’m pretty good at Dig Dug and Pac-Man. I’ve recently gotten into Battlestar Galactica if you guys play that one.”

“So are you in if we go?” Lucas asked. I could see a hint of red come over his face. Just enough for me to give him shit about it.

“Eager, Sinclair?” I teased but smiled, “I’ll come. It sounds fun and I’ve not been anywhere but school, my house, and just walking around anyway.”

You should come,” Will said, “We get into it.”

“I’ll come,” I agreed. “Get ready to lose at Dig Dug through, nerds.” A collective long ‘ohhh’ went around the boys.

“We’ll get my mom to drive us,” Dustin said, “And then we put your so-called skills to the test.”

Mike Wheeler's Letter #1 to Miss Jane "Eleven" Brenner

Hey El,

So I hope you're having fun in Switzerland. Hawkins is pretty much the same but now Lucas likes the new girl, Max. You saw her at the dance. Will and Dustin like to give him crap about it but I'm happy for him. AV Club is still going on too but I don't know who's going to run it when we all go to high school and I need to figure that out.

How are you? Is it pretty where you are? Mom said maybe soon I could call you since it costs some money to call internationally. If you want, send pictures of where you are so I can see and show the guys and Max.

Miss you El,

Mike

Eleven

Papa arranged for a carriage pulled by beautiful horses to take us through a section of Zurich that had old houses and things that were older than me, like hundreds older. The carriage itself had no doors but no seat belt so Papa sat me on his lap. I felt like Switzerland was full of old things even in our castle like the bold bath I was never immersed in past my waist to bathe.

Papa was singing a song to me in German I think because the words were not one I knew. "I used to be sung this very song," Papa said as I looked at the Swiss landscape outside the old houses and mountains. "I used to sing that to Sister Maggie when she was little. Spoke German to her a bit."

"And me?'

"I call you liebling, which means sweetheart in German. Do you recall yesterday with Freund when we calmed you down? I counted

in German before giving you what helped."

"German sounds pretty to me," I said. "You speak it well. Did Opa know German? Maybe that helped him in the War."

"He knows it well and taught me as a child," his arm around me to keep me from falling out of the carriage felt like how I imagined family to feel. Maybe just maybe one day I could let Fruend, who I suspected wanted to be in my family, into my life.

"Does Freund not like me because distant?" I asked Papa, worried that maybe the Swissman didn't like me and that might make him want to put me in the bath. I liked Freund and wanted to be good because he was different. "If no, he might put me in bath or shock."

"He was horrified that Owens suggested that," Papa said softly, "He was concerned for you. I don't believe he'd do that to you. What he wants to do is spend time with you and talk to help."

"Festering."

"El, you will be fine. I promise you."

Maggie Brenner, in her "Heaven"

"We went to Switzerland," Eleven told me as we twirled flowers in our hands sitting in the grass. The sun was shining not too hot but just warm enough to make it feel like spring forever. "We have a house in city and family. I have Swiss psychologist who is sweet to me, brings me waffles."

"He killed Owens," I said thinking back to watching Papa that night. I remembered seeing him put El in the back of the car sound asleep because he couldn't dare leave her. He had driven to the psychologist's house and how he found that out in a small place like Hawkins unsurprising but his intent in going clear. The syringe I knew to have killed more than a few men on his belt.

He had stopped himself that night. But the next night Owens was just a body in the ground. And as wrong as it was, having sensed those

shocks as El had hung out with me that day I can't say his actions were unjustified. As I had sensed what was happening I'd winced a few times and my nose had bled. I had thought Papa was going to throw Owens to the floor and beat him, I knew he was strong enough to. Head wounds had killed many Hawkins Lab employees, more than the Phenol.

"When?" she asked, apparently not knowing but not surprised.

"The night of the shocks he almost did but he did the night before you left."

"I told him they scared me. Even though Owens might be nice, the shocks scared me. I think he tricked Papa." That night I could feel the vulnerability to rage and need for revenge in him by simply channeling the feeling of him holding Eleven in his arms. If anyone had tried to take her there would have been a thud on the floor and a cover-up. "Never again, he promised."

I nodded, thinking back to how he'd slaughtered those men who may or may not have deserved to die for killing me. I still wasn't sure if they did but I had felt that he was certain of the answer to that question.

19. I'll Be Here Until the End of Time

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi guys!
>
> Here's the next chapter and I might post 2 tonight! This chapter was fun because we get some insight into how Maggie's death and El's birth connect and Brenner's reaction to both.
>
> As always I love the feedback so why not drop some by?

Chapter 19- I'll Be Here Until the End of Time
Flashback, February 19, 1971
Martin Brenner

I was the first person to hold Jane Ives.

As her mother was being dealt with by my underlings I stood in the delivery room holding the extraordinary baby. She didn't cry but slept soundly and her little chest rose and fell already in the rhythm of breathing she'd begun two moments ago. She nestled into me and turned on her side, Terry's blood still on her scarlet under the lights.

The door opened and I turned to face the man in a white coat snapping me from my musings holding the child I'd delivered. "Dr. Brenner?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"I'm sorry to tell you this, but I found information on your daughter, Margaret." I didn't know if I was breathing, just standing transfixed in waiting. "She's passed away." The man didn't have time to elaborate much before I had set Jane Ives down and reached for the gun on my belt that all at Hawkins Lab carried. The shot that rang out made Jane cry and I stand in rage to avoid joining her in tears, the corpse of the Grim Reaper at my feet.

Eleven

Present day

Papa washed my hair that night. The shampoo smelled like lemons and I liked smelling it just as much as I liked it being massaged into my hair. I had a plate of cookies by me resting on the windowsill that Inge had baked, she always said I needed to eat more. Papa had weighed me recently and I remember the numbers read 87. I had asked if that was good.

“Liebling, you’re underweight which is why I can see your ribs. We must have you eat more,” he had told me when I had asked him. I’d been weighed last week and still been at 87. Standing up in the warm bath now I looked and could see things that were pointing out towards my stomach. Ribs, Papa said once. I put my hand there and tried to push them in gently. “Liebling, you can’t push your ribs in. Maybe we just need to have you on fluids sometimes, I know you eat well. Some people just have trouble gaining weight since their metabolism is so high like yours.”

“Metabolism?”

“It’s the speed that your body works at to keep you alive,” Papa said, picking me up and putting me in a warm towel.

“Mine works fast?”

“Fast enough that putting on weight for you might be hard but we do need to get you to a normal weight.”

“I don’t want to be big enough so that you can’t carry me sometimes Papa.”

Martin Brenner

As night sparkled in Zurich I was putting El to bed, tucking the covers around her like a cocoon. I laid on top of the other made half of her bed, her ear pressed perfectly to hear my heartbeat. “Feel so stupid for this,” she said, “I’m big, I shouldn’t need Papa to sleep by me but dreams so scary.”

“I will stay until they are no more,” I said, my hand resting on her hair, “However long that is.” Out of her open door, the hallway was silent as a tomb with the lights off except for a little night light. “Papa loves you, El.”

“I hope you don’t think I’m stupid for this. Too old.”

“Fear doesn’t pick and choose who it wants, liebling. I could never think you’re stupid. But all is right now, you are where you need to be. And your mental wounds will not fester. I promise you, Jane Eleven.”

Notes for the Chapter:

That last line though. Brenner knows things, y'all.

20. The Swiss Won't Scare Her

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi yes hello!
>
> Just want to say I loved this chapter since Freund is absolutely the better choice for El, that's solidified here I think. Also, we meet Hopper and Joyce who are a thing (yay). There's of course more adorable El finally getting all the help.

Chapter 20- The Swiss Won't Scare Her
March 6, 1984

Luca Freund

Having known Miss Eleven for a few days, Brenner and I had agreed on establishing her in good physical health before deciding on a mental treatment for the skittish sweet girl that didn't frighten her or would have the Nuremberg Code quaking in its boots like they apparently suggested in America now. IV fluids seemed to be the most logical starting point from a medical viewpoint so that's what Brenner did. How he already had all the supplies he needed I wasn't sure but I was in no position to question as he hung the bags. Miss Eleven did quite well with the little needle stick and taping of the IV line but that might be because they had prodded her as a child. "The pricks don't bother you?" I asked her as we sat at the table eating Eggos that morning.

"No," she said, "Hurt only a minute. Shocks hurt longer and are scarier."

"You were awake when Owens shocked you?" I asked, the horror of the entire situation having jumped up a terrifying level if this was true. She, sitting in Brenner's arms his head lowered to listen to her and attend to her, shook her head no but said,

"Shocks are electricity. Must hurt. Mess up bad."

How she could know that if she was asleep when the treatment was administered shook me further. I knew I would have reported this Owens to an international tribunal on health or the UN's Human Rights Council immediately. "I'll kill him," I muttered in German. I know that Brenner probably was here to avoid succeeding in the feat. Because he would have had the gall to actually do it.

I knew what that syringe on his belt in the holster was, I'd known for days. I just didn't think he'd gotten to use it in America.

Eleven

The needle in my arm didn't hurt and I liked seeing the bag hung from the pole that connected me to it dwindle in the amount of fluid was in it. "Where water go?" I asked Papa as he washed my body with sponges since being in the bath might damage the needle. My feet hanging off the ground as I sat on the counter, still able to see my ribs. "How many are there?" I asked about ribs.

"Twenty four, twelve pairs," he said, "The ones we can see are the false ribs and floating ribs towards the bottom to your ribcage." I was fascinated by the big medical words he was using and loved how smart he was, way smarter than me. "They protect your heart and lungs." I knew hearts beat and lungs breathed.

"Oh. You're smart, Papa."

"So are you, liebling," he said putting me in a towel, one of his hands rolling the pole and the other carrying me. We went to my closet and he put me in a soft lavender colored dress. I didn't mind that he changed my clothes, his training made me know he would see my body as a hallowed little machine that he said worked even though I thought it broken along with my mind. "Perhaps we can send a letter to your Michael. I bet he's sent you one already. And then soon we can call him."

"Yes! And I can visit Maggie for you, too. She misses you so much."

"Not today, liebling. You need to rest your powers. You understand?"

I had never rested my powers at the lab.

“I will write Mike then. Mike is smart, Papa. He is president of AV Club,” I said. “He and Freund are alike. Very nice. Want to help me like you. But you be leader.” The hairbrush ran gently through my hair and I watched as it curled up naturally. “Where is Freund?”

“He’s downstairs with Inge, liebling.”

Mike Wheeler

Today was D&D day at Will’s house. Lucas had invited Max to hang out with us there and watch D&D or join in on playing if she wanted. Mrs. Byers got us pizza and when we came over Hopper was there. Apparently, he and Mrs. Byers were dating now and had been since Will got back from the Upside Down. They looked so happy and Will told me he hoped they’d get married.

“Oh, Mom and Hopper, this is Max,” Will said introducing our new friend, “Lucas likes her,” he smirked as Max smirked back. Lucas rolled his eyes.

“Shut up Byers.”

“It’s nice to meet you, Max. We’ve got pizza on the way for you guys if you’re hungry. Have you heard anything from sweet El? She hasn’t been here in a while.”

“She’s in Switzerland,” I said, “Her mental injuries are better treated under the Swiss,” I said. I hadn’t admitted it before now but I did know she didn’t trust any psychologist here so maybe the Swiss wouldn’t scare her so much.

“Poor dear,” Mrs. Byers said.

21. The Demon Researcher of Hawkins

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hi!
>
> Here's a really fun chapter for me because it describes something that was previously hinted at which you'll find out about as you read. As always, feedback keeps me going!

Chapter 21- The Demon Researcher of Hawkins
March 6, 1984
Will Byers

I hadn't told the guys, Hop, Jonathan, or my mom about the episodes I'd been having since Christmas. They didn't need to know since things were starting to go back to normal now in the months since I got home. And honestly, with Hawkins in a state of shock still, I wasn't in the mood to cause more trouble. But still, the feelings of being taken over by the Thing were too much and sooner or later I'd have to say something because I knew I needed help. I didn't escape the Upside Down on my own and I couldn't do this.

But I knew I needed help quickly. The episodes were getting longer than just a few minutes of zoning out. Now I could hear the monster in my head more often than not and it scared me.

Oh god, it scared me.

Martin Brenner
Flashback, February 28, 1984

The night before leaving the country I did kill Sam Owens.

His death was too easy to cover up as a suicide for me to not take advantage of the one last thing I needed to do in Hawkins before getting El to the help she needed and deserved. That night like the night prior staking out the house El had come with me but she was

consumed by a hypnotic that would make her sleepy. It was either that or leave her at the house and the second option was just unacceptable given her severe mental injuries where she needed me as around the clock company, protection, and care. Thank god Owens' car was the only one in the driveway.

With her lightly dozing in my arms, her breathing tangible against me and a count ongoing in my head, I walked up to Owens' front door. Being so late he surprisingly answered but was taken aback certainly. "Dr. Brenner? Is Miss Jane all right?"

"Let me set her on the couch," I didn't respond to the question. The stunned madman let me do as I'd stated, El's hand weakly but reflexively reaching out as I put her down. She said papa weakly. "It's all right," I said, "Lay here now, drift to sleep." The hypnotics left her to suggestion and she did.

"What's going on here?" Owens wondered, coming over to her. I waited for his hand to lift her way before I threw him back into the wall. The thud his body hit with was loud but nowhere near as loud as the echo of my boots in his ears as I came to call his number. With a knife and a syringe on my belt I had my options: slit his throat or poison him. Like Sweeney Todd himself, I was going to get my revenge. "What the…"

"I never trusted you, Owens. I do admit I made a mistake in thinking I did for Eleven and you've proved me right. And I'm generally right. So, given how things have transpired and you've returned to me a child made more skittish and frightened through a clever deception I come to test my latest hypothesis. If I'm right, you won't survive. Even if I'm wrong, your survival odds are nonexistent." The silver blade on my belt cut through the pale flesh like baked bread so smooth and vulnerable. The blood loss killing him slowly as my stroke was taking sweet agonizing time painted a melodramatic map of the events of the night from the dying man.

The light in his eyes was leaving, like the darkness in mine had when I had finally said enough. But Owens walked the line of light and dark with just enough shadow to consider it viable to do something that would have any post-war medical community question his motives and his character, perhaps revoke his license, put him on

trial. But the man did not deserve that, not while El was sicker than before. He had made her sicker.

So he had made her sick, it was only fair for me to make him die. And make any person who loved the man suffer by questioning just how something so tragic had happened so unexpectedly.

Maggie Brenner, in her “Heaven”

Papa killing Owens was one of the two murders he’d never repent and I’d stopped trying to get him to. Hawkins Lab were truly bad men, evil, people who only wanted to win at any cost. I was a victim as was Sister El and my father saw himself as avenger I could only remind him so many times that he should not stoop to their level.

It was the tragedy of my father: one so sweet and loving, but his scars rested in the history of his family and the loss of it along with the history of his times. And when old wounds reopened so did the revenge-crazed man who demanded at least one thing in his life go right not undeservedly but not in the right ways.

And I can tell you, no one found out about Sam Owens’ actual cause of death. Suicide and murder by stabbing looked so similar in the case but the latter was implausible because there was not a trace of evidence to prove it.

Notes for the Chapter:

> And yes, Owens is dead, actually dead. Now all she has is Freund, who will actually help.

22. Still Sick

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here, my loves, the PLOT THICKENS!
>
> And still, El Brenner is an adorable 1930s loving Swiss princess who deserves the world.

Chapter 22- Still Sick
March 7, 1984
Eleven

This morning I was allowed off my IV drips for some time, Papa taking them out for me without much other than a little tug. I looked at the little dot it had left and the red blood surrounding it which Papa cleaned. “Working?” I asked.

“We will see,” he said, “I’m thinking it will in addition to all the rich Swiss food we’ve been having.”

“And Eggos, Papa!” I reminded him, the plate beside me on the bed along with the tea Inge brought. Freund wasn’t coming today so it was just me and Papa and I thought we could finish our 1930s themed party. So he put me in another elegant dress like a princess but then again he always treated me like a princess and he was my knight here to protect me but also the king who lived in the castle.

“Papa, I’m so glad we have a day to just be nice. Like nothing is wrong,” I said as he slipped the dress over my head. A day where I wasn’t a mental case that needed to heal. A day to be just a princess who loved the 1930s.

“Nothing was ever wrong, Jane Eleven. Things are just getting back to normal and you’ve never been in perfect health, liebling, and I wish to get you there because you deserve it.” He helped me down and then offered me his arm which I took. From the open door, I could hear the boombox start to play and I was astounded this was actually my life. I bet my face showed it.

“Now, Miss Brenner, we will dance like it’s 1935,” he said and I put my other hand in his as well, starting to twirl slowly to the music with him the band-aid on my left arm glinted in the light, the only reminder of my illness for the day.

Dustin Henderson

Today Will told us he’d been having episodes ever since he’d gotten back from the Upside Down. He had us all around the lunch table plus Max who looked utterly confused but I wasn’t about to fill in the blanks for her. She wasn’t one of us and therefore didn’t need to know what we knew. It just wasn’t safe for anybody if she knew.

“We’re in deep shit,” I said knowing that things honestly would never go back to where they’d been before Will had been taken. Max still looked confused, raising an eyebrow demanding she be filled in. I looked at Lucas, then Will, then Mike.

“It’s a long story,” Mike said.

“Yeah,” Lucas said looking around to see if anyone was eavesdropping, “It’s not one to tell here.”

“Then when?” Max challenged, not backing down. Son of a bitch.

“Later,” Mike finalized, “If you’re going to be hanging out with us you might as well know. If you’re willing to take the risk, that is.”

Will Byers

I finally told Mom what had been happening after school and like I thought she freaked. “How long has this been going on? Are you sure that’s what these are? Who’s doing this to you baby?” Mom’s voice sounded like she was about to burst into hysterical tears, “Hop we need to do something. Take him to the hospital. Take him somewhere.”

As I was listening to my mom’s frantic chatter, a cold feeling came

over me. Then the lights went off and suddenly I was alone in the house. But the house wasn't the house at all. Now it was just dark and an endless hallway. Something touched my shoulder, the hand cold and feeling like scales that made me shudder. I screamed as the thing behind me grabbed my shoulder.

Trying to thrash away from it I dropped to the floor and knowing not what else to do I began to roll away from it like they teach you as a kid if you're trapped in a house on fire. But no house was burning here so I had no idea what to do. So I screamed.

Notes for the Chapter:

> Ooh, what's going on with Will?! Any guesses? Let me know with comments!

23. Working for the Weekend

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hello loves!
>
> So I'm posting two or three chapters tonight, I'll see depending on where the second chapter I post ends. Anyway, hope you like and if you do definitely drop by a comment or kudo!
>
> Here's where things get interesting... (and Max takes charge!)

Chapter 23- Working for the Weekend
March 8, 1984
Mike Wheeler

It was arcade night, but Will ended up not being able to come since his mom was really concerned about these episodes he'd just told us he'd been having for months. With the lab now the grounds of the Brenner mansion the only logical place to take Will was Hawkins General Hospital which was not the place to be on a Friday night.

But here Max, Lucas, Dustin, and I were in my basement hatching a plan to spy on the doctors to figure out what was going on with Will. He'd been in the hospital two nights now and we'd been in the dark. "I wish Eleven was here," I said, "She could help us break in." I found myself smiling when I said her name and I hoped she was being treated like a queen in Switzerland rather than a mentally exhausted girl.

"We could go through the vent system," Max said, "It'd be less of a risk of us being seen anyways. The tricky part is getting to the vents without being noticed." Lucas looked at her, amazed and intrigued at what she was saying. "Oh come on, you guys didn't think of that?" I shook my head.

"No."

“You guys really need me,” she said sarcastically, “So it’s 3:45 now so we wait until after visiting hours end at 8.”

“Are you crazy?” Lucas asked.

“You got anything better, Sinclair?” He didn’t, none of us did, so we yielded.

Eleven

Late that night I was sitting with Papa on our couch, he was reading to me in German from the newspaper. I closed my eyes listening to the precision of the words and feeling the fluids come into my arm to help me grow. “Is there a king of Switzerland?” I asked Papa, hoping there wasn’t so he could be.

“There is a President of the Federal Council called Schlumpf,” Papa said, “He is kind of like President Reagan at home you see.”

“May we meet him?” I asked, wanting to ask him if he could make Papa king and me princess. I wondered if Presidents of the Council could. Maybe Freund could be a courtier in our court or advisor to the king. “He can make you king and me princess.”

“Sadly, Switzerland already has a government, liebling,” he said, “However if you would like, I might crown you princess of Oase Estate. Electress rather, it sounds far more German, no?”

“Oh yes, Papa! And Freund can come.”

“We will invite him to your coronation as princess set for tomorrow,” Papa said wrapping me in the warm blanket Freund had gotten for me last I saw him. I looked at the IV line in my arm, “Call Mike and tell him.”

“Oh, he will receive a royal decree.”

Holy shit, I thought as I came back to the Wheeler house wearing black jeans and a black top, my hair tied up in a high ponytail. I had said I'd meet the boys there at 7:30, right as Mike's parents left for something. I walked down to the basement and Lucas signaled me to come join them. "Holy shit," Dustin said as Duran Duran's "Hungry Like the Wolf" played on the boombox. "We're doing this."

"If we want to know what's up with Will we are," I clarified. The boys and I were going to leave in about 15 with them on their bikes and me on my board. Mike had a bag packed with supplies.

"Honestly, let's just head out now," he said, "No use in waiting."

"Are Will's mom and Hopper there?" I asked.

"Probably," Lucas said, "I would bet Mrs. Byers has Jonathan there too so it's even more important we're not seen and then get the hell out."

"Agreed," I said taking the first step to the kitchen, "Come on we shouldn't be wasting this time," The boys followed me, board in hand, The sun was just starting to set outside so we needed to get there before dark and get home before any adults noticed we were gone somewhere other than the arcade where we'd said we'd be.

Operation 'Find Out What Was Up With Will' was a go.

24. Worse Before Better

Notes for the Chapter:

Here's the second installment! Enjoy!

Chapter 24- Worse Before Better
March 8-9, 1984

Lucas Sinclair

Max's plan was insane but here we were, pulling up on our bikes and her on her skateboard. "All right nerds," she said as we parked, "Let's do this. And act normal," she took the lead like it had always been hers and none of us challenged it. This was her idea after all. Looking at the hospital, it was buzzing with people going home for the night and I hoped they'd pay us no mind.

Personally, hospitals creeped me out with the antiseptic smell all around and the sick people. Max's eyes darted to the information desk where a lady was on the phone. She summoned us to sneak by, her easily but not long after someone looked our way. I didn't have enough time to think oh shit before Max grabbed me, pressing me against the wall. Nobody was breathing it felt like and I didn't dare look.

Luckily, the wall had a vent on the side of it that was blowing cool air at my back. I tapped Max's shoulder to show her. She nodded at me and mouthed, "Stand lookout," to me and the guys. We were like her forcefield as she yanked at the metal until it broke free.

Martin Brenner

El went to sleep at about 10, curled in Freund's gift blanket and the IV dripping into her veins with another bag having just been hung. Freund and I planned on weighing her tomorrow to see if the IV was doing its job for her. Inge had gotten El to eat two helpings of schnitzel which she loved very much.

El's breathing came in, out, in, out against the pillow and I could see her chest rise and fall. El's head resting on my shoulder and her right hand thrown over to hang onto me. Into her hair, I sang "Weißt du, wieviel Sternlein stehe" - a German lullaby that dated back to the 19th century that I had sung Maggie before they took her. El must've heard me sing to her because she squeezed onto my hand. "Papa?' I didn't think she was awake.

"What is it, liebling? More dreams?"

"No. Sorry I'm so sick," she said, looking up at me the red substance of blood slightly coming out of her nose. I reached and wiped it for her. It was moments like these that I was especially glad I had killed Sam Owens, heard his body hit the floor, had slit his throat, had his blood soak my hands. Her heart rate had picked up, thinking she had done wrong.

"No, El," I said my fingers twirling one of her little curls, "What Owens did hurt you. I shouldn't have let that happen. Will you forgive me?"

"I forgive you, Papa. Always," she said and my arm around her squeezed gently.

"Jane Eleven, you are the reason I'm living. Go to sleep now, liebling and tomorrow we will send your Michael a letter," I said softly beginning to sing her back to sleep. She smiled.

"Does Mike know German, Papa?"

"I don't know liebling," I said as her eyes closed. To watch her body live in spite of her mental damage was the most inspiring things I'd ever witnessed. For such a soul who wanted the simple things in life like Eggos, warm baths listening to 1930s swing tunes with the grand doors open and a window looking at the Alps, and warm blankets to be so mentally wronged but still want these simple things and love everyone was in a word extraordinary.

Mike Wheeler

Holy crap. Max's plan was working.

In the vents it was dark but Dustin's flashlight Max held gave us some light as we crawled army style. "Where is he?" Dustin whispered. Lucas slapped his arm to shush him. Max shrugged a little to say her guess was as good as ours. But it wasn't like Hawkins Gen was a big hospital, it was only one floor of patient rooms. It wasn't like the big hospital in Indianapolis.

I could hear voices as we crawled and saw fractions of lights coming from the rooms. I listened for Will, Hopper, Mrs. Byers, or Jonathan. After crawling for however long I finally thought I heard Mrs. Byers. I tapped Max and she nodded, confirming I wasn't the only one. Her head tilted back, her finger at her lips to tell Lucas and Dustin to stay quiet.

"This thing still has an influence on my boy!" Mrs. Byers sobbed loudly, "Tell me you can stop it!"

Oh my god. Things just got way worse.

Notes for the Chapter:

> I think that's a good cliffhanger to leave y'all on for at least a few days! As always, let me know if you liked it and are in suspense. I'd say things are heating up...

25. Debrief

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hey guys!
>
> Here's the chapter where the Party tries to dissect exactly what they saw at the hospital. As I told Ab0019: be very worried about Will for the time being...
>
> Also, I'm loving Max taking the lead. She's so much fun.
>
> Leave feedback if you'd be so kind!

Chapter 25- Debrief
March 9, 1984
Eleven

This morning Inge had the radio on and they were playing a song I knew from home by the Police. I couldn't remember the name but I knew I had heard it on the radio before. The Alps reflected the sunlight as Inge served me my Eggos, I had a piece of paper and a pen by Papa so I could tell him my letter to Mike. Freund had come for breakfast.

"Freund, we are going to write to my friend Mike in Hawkins," I said, "He's in the eighth grade whatever that is. You are my Swiss friend." He smiled and I took a bite of Eggos as the song changed to my Wham! song as I heard the word 'jitterbug'. "This song is one of my favorites," I said, "It's by Wham!"

"It's a very fun song," Freund agreed, "So this Mike, he's your best friend? Does he have other friends you know?"

"Yes! Dustin, Lucas, and Will. They're all so nice but I don't think they know German."

"Then we shall write them in English, liebling," Papa kissed my forehead.

Miss Jane Eleven Brenner's First Reply to Mike Wheeler

Hi Mike,

Switzerland is pretty. Live in a castle bigger than in Hawkins with mountains. Made friends here like Freund who has a baby son Alessio but miss you. Still sick mind but wound may not be festering now, don't know. How's school and AV Club? Talk to new girl Max? Sending pictures.

Miss you! Your friend El

Dustin Henderson

We'd stayed at Mike's after making our way frantically back from the hospital. We all were so stunned that we couldn't talk about anything properly before crashing in the basement. Max had gone to her house, she was even shocked but seemed less so than us. Something seriously weird was up with Will, man.

The next morning we all woke eager to debrief from last night's mission. "What the hell could've happened to him in the Upside Down?" Lucas asked as we all remained in our sleeping bags, too lazy to move but wanting to figure things out.

"Maybe the Demogorgon infected him with something, over," Max said on the walkie-talkie channel. We had let her join ours in preparation for last night, "Could that be something? Isn't the Upside Down like a virus wanting to conquer our world?"

"Yeah kinda," I said, "But wouldn't Will have gotten like this sooner then? It's been months."

"Some viruses can take time to start causing bad things to happen," Lucas said, "Maybe this is one of those. Thoughts?"

"I agree," Mike said, "But it's not like the flu or anything. It won't go away after a week, so what do we do?"

“We find what causes it and kill it,” Max said, “Duh.”

26. More Than Capable

Notes for the Chapter:

> You guys I'm loving how the two separate stories are playing out concurrently! Also yes this chapter confirms even Will is worried about Will so you definitely should be. And ugh El is so sweet with her concern for Will.
>
> As always, feedback is encouraged!

Chapter 26- More Than Capable
March 11, 1984

Martin Brenner

My American sources never disappointed me with the news. After El's breakfast, I sat with her on the couch looking at the Hawkins local paper from a few days ago that was rush shipped here. The front page story mentioned Will Byers' hospitalization and El pointed at his picture. "Will, Papa. Will Byers."

"Something is wrong with him, this says," I told her, "He's in the hospital in Hawkins." Her back stiffened at the word hospital but released when she realized that what I had said didn't mean she was going to one. We had never even been to Freund's office at the largest hospital in town, taking El there would've been a great mistake. El looked over my shoulder at his picture and then at me.

"Upside Down made him sick, like me Papa. Festering," she said, "Although Will different sick."

"Did he say anything to you?"

"No. Maggie told me in dreams. She knows Will and is worried too."

Will Byers

I was so scared. Now I was in the hospital because everyone knew and freaked out about my episodes. The machines in the room beeped loudly in my ears as my mom was asleep in the chair beside my bed, the noise not disturbing her. I thought I saw the lights flicker a few times and heard my name whispered through the wall. Will Byers. Will Byers. WILL BYERS.

What was wrong with me?!

Eleven

Papa put me on the scale to see how much I weighed, the Alps visible from where I stood like a statue. I looked as the numbers jumped up and finally rested on 88 which meant I was bigger. “Bigger Papa,” I said excitedly and he swung me up and I put my arms around him. “Took long though.”

“It’s because your body metabolism is high. Do you remember what that is?” he asked. I nodded. “So it’ll take a bit of time to get you to a healthy weight but you will get there, I know you will,” he kissed the crown of my head and his heartbeat I could feel against me stronger than mine. Mine felt weak compared to his.

“Am I sicker than Will, Papa?” I asked thinking about Will’s picture and hoping he was okay and would get out of the hospital soon. I had never been to a hospital in Switzerland. “Will is sick.”

No, liebling, you’re not sicker than him. The illnesses are different,” he said, “Although some things are the same like the post-traumatic stress.”

‘Can Freund help Will too?”

“Perhaps, but for now he just wants to help you,” I smiled thinking about the Swissman who was downstairs. “Will is being helped in Hawkins.”

Mike Wheeler

Max came over after breakfast and we ushered her down to the basement. “What you did last night was awesome,” Dustin said, “Since our party is a democracy we’ve voted that you can be the Zoomer who makes sure we get our shit done and stick to our word.” I nodded and so did Lucas. I could see a hint of color on his cheeks.

“Okay,” she said, “I’m in. Now can we please talk about last night? I haven’t been able to stop theorizing and wanted to share.”

“So have we,” I said, “We like your virus idea. But what kind of virus could a Demogorgon infect a human with? Like rabies?” I didn’t know many viruses so that was the first one that popped into my head, “Maybe El knows about it. She knew about the Upside Down so she must know about this thing too, right?”

“El?” Max looked confused, “Who’s El?”

“Our mage,” Dustin said, “She’s like a wizard can flip things with her mind and do stuff like that. She killed two Department of Energy workers last year when they came after us at the school. It was awesome. She figured out that Will was hiding.”

“But she’s in Switzerland now,” I said, “So we’re on our own.”

“We’ve proven we’re more than capable,” Max said to offer comfort, “And that we’re kind of badasses.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> A NOTE ON EL'S HEALTH:
>
> Ab0019 and I talked about this but let me say it here: El is not getting sicker. At a later point, Freund states that the problem is her trauma won't disappear magically but she'll rather have days better than others and her triggers (i.e. isolation) will remain.

27. Primum Non Nocere

Notes for the Chapter:

> The chapter title comes from the Latin for "First, do no harm" which is actually not in the text of the Hippocratic Oath as most people think. Remember that phrase, it's symbolic (imagine me saying that in the voice of a high school teacher).
>
> The Will drama is about to amp up so be prepared, my kids. This is Hawkins after all.
>
> Feedback makes my soul happy, but you guys know that!

Chapter 27- Primum Non Nocere
March 11, 1984

Luca Fruend

I showed Miss Eleven pictures of Alessio and Isotta, my wife who was very Italian. Miss Eleven looked at the pictures and pointed at my son, “Meet him?” She then looked at Isotta, “Pretty. Beautiful.”

“You can meet them, of course. They would love to have you over with us for dinner,” I said, “Issie would love to know a little girl since we have no daughter yet. Maybe one day we will.” Miss Eleven smiled and showed me a picture of her and a boy about her age, both of them smiling with Miss Eleven in a beautiful dress.

“Mike,” she said, “Friend. Close. He’s in America.”

“You must miss him.”

“Yes. But I say he like Europe if he came sometimes. I like Europe very much.”

Eleven

We got to call Hawkins!

Papa called the hospital there, I think to ask about Will. He had me close enough that my head on his shoulder could hear him and the other person. “Whatever was in that dimension has more to it than we thought and Byers might be able to show us that. Yes. I’d like to see for myself. Yes, I can. Keep him there until I get there early tomorrow. Yes. Bring them.” The phone hung up and I looked at Papa, thinking this must mean we were going back to Hawkins for maybe some time but I didn’t want to leave Oase Estate either since I loved it here so. But maybe I’d see Mike.

“Back to Hawkins?” I asked Papa, he nodded.

“Yes. We need to figure out what the Gate is doing now, strange things El.” I nodded understanding, thinking about the plane we’d come on and how nice it was. If we were to be there tomorrow we’d have to leave now.

I let Papa put me to sleep in the house so I wouldn’t be scared by the plane taking off. I ended up sleeping the whole flight and woke up at some time later not in the air but on the ground so we must be back home. Papa was carrying me and I had my hair braided with a string of pink pearls woven through the braid and my white dress having pearls sewn into the fabric.

I opened my eyes to see we were inside the hospital in Hawkins and my hand went to Papa’s shoulder. “Eleven, meine liebling,” he said gently, “These men would bow to you now if you or I tell them so. They are afraid of us,” his hand carrying me gives a reassuring squeeze and I look at the scientists or doctors who offer smiles to me.

“Fetch Eggos?” I asked him.

“Yes. Ross, go see about Eggos for Miss Jane.” He did.

Mike Wheeler

“Eleven?”

I couldn't believe my eyes. Standing in the doorway to Will's hospital room there she was looking like a princess in a white gown for lack of a better word and her hair done up so nicely with jewels in it. She ran and was in my arms, still so fragile but it felt good to hug her. "Mike." Her feet were wobbly a bit and she pulled away and said, "Still sleepy." I wanted to kiss her but there were too many people.

"It's so good to see you, honey," Mrs. Byers said hugging El. The party all behind me, including Max who hadn't met El yet. If Will was awake now he would have smiled too. "You look beautiful," Mrs. Byers said as Brenner took El in his arms. I watched Mrs. Byers look skeptical and I knew I did but I had to shove that aside so I could take El's hand that was hanging to where I could take it.

"Thank you," El said, her head lolling a little on Brenner's shoulder but I could plainly see her affection for him shine as his for her did. I realized at that simple moment that I had been wrong about him that there was redemption for him at least towards El and he and I had the same goal to make El happy in any way we could.

Notes for the Chapter:

And…

HOW ABOUT THOSE MILEVEN REUNION FEELS? Love them!

28. Martin Brenner: The Demon Doctor of Hawkins, Indiana

Notes for the Chapter:

> And here we go...
>
> Get ready my kids, because from now on Will. Is. Not. Safe. I know I've said it before but I mean it more and more each chapter. Actually, if a character is not a Brenner they're in some kind of danger (whether that's from the Upside Down or the wrath of Martin Brenner)
>
> As always, feedback would be amazing!

Chapter 28- Martin Brenner, the Demon Doctor of Hawkins, Indiana
March 11, 1984
Martin Brenner

Ross came back with Eggos already heated and plated for El who was still groggy from the anesthetic to calm her during our flight back. If I wasn't interested in the Byers case I would have taken El to a room so she could rest properly but that would not go over well with her so I simply held onto her, Ross having taken her ballet slippers off to make her more comfortable. Her heart's beat against my shoulder reminded me why the hell I was here in the first place.

"Dr. Brenner, we have reason to believe the Byers boy might be a link to the Other Dimension," Ross said, "Whatever lives there is tethered to him." I heard Joyce Byers let out a squeak or wail, what it was I wasn't really interested. I could care about the Byers boy but the mystery was certainly a far more interesting prospect.

"You have your theory. Test it," I ordered. Ross hesitated.

"Director Duffer must be notified before we do anything," he said taking a cautionary step backward. I simply smiled.

"So he will."

Eleven

Papa killed Director Duffer, I could sense it. But I forgave him. Because I loved him. I think I'd been asleep on his shoulder when he'd injected the substance that killed on his belt nothing that would ever get near me. I didn't know Director Duffer but I did think the name sounded familiar so maybe he was one of the Bad Men in my bad dreams. I opened my eyes.

"Duffer a bad man when I was small?" I asked Papa, knowing that the connection must be there somewhere. I knew that I knew his name.

"Yes, he was."

"He in my dreams, the dreams I tell you and Freund about. I miss Freund. I hope no psychologists while here," I said thinking who in America was as good as Freund? No one. "Dreams part of what makes sick," I told Papa.

"He was in your dreams?"

"Yes. Scary. Put into the tank with Owens," I tried to explain having just given him almost a justification for the corpse that lay at Papa's feet, so cold. Duffer was allowed nowhere near me even as a body with no way to live like me. I stared at the corpse then at Papa, the German-Swiss king never crowned. Papa's hand rested gently on my head.

"He's gone now, El. Do you remember any other faces from the dreams?' I thought we were here for Will and I wondered if Maggie knew what had just happened. Maybe Papa would kill every Department of Energy member. Wrong. But to him right. I considered his question.

"I can find them."

I know there is a music called Sweeney Todd from the TV about a person like Papa who is good but revenge consumes him. I had never seen the music before but hearing a bit of the story on TV I knew

Sweeney had a daughter too, called Joanna. Maybe I was Joanna and Papa Sweeney. I wondered if Joanna had an Opa like me who saved Americans.

Martin Brenner

El let the remaining anesthetic in her system consume her and sank into sleep. Stepping over Duffer's corpse with his worthlessness of a being nowhere near touching El I made way back to the Byers boy's room. Ross stood there and looked at me, "Sir?"

"Director Duffer is more than fine doing what needs to be done," I said. "Do what you will to attract this monster," I said adjusting the sleeping El and catching Wheeler's eye. He and his friends stood vigil at the Byers' boy's bed. I stared them down, but Michael Wheeler's eyes were on El.

"Should I bring Miss Jane home?" Ross asked me,

"No," I said, "She needs to be with me. I don't want any of you near her," I said directly. The string of pearls in her hair glinting under the fluorescent lights of Byers' room. "You may do your tests on the boy starting now," I instructed.

"What are you going to do to him?" The older Byers boy cried.

"Whatever we have to."

29. Danger Zone

Notes for the Chapter:

> Will is on the highway to the Danger Zone. Be very afraid, my kids.
>
> Also I dig this chapter because it really is one that shows the story comes together through the little details. Sure the big picture is super important but the little one makes it work.
>
> Comments and kudos appreciated!

Chapter 29- Danger Zone
March 11, 1984
Eleven

I was in and out for hours but we stayed at Hawkins General. When I woke up once they were asking Will questions, he was hooked up to a brain monitor thing. Mrs. Byers looked really scared and even Mike looked worried along with Dustin and Lucas. Will was in another room separated by glass from me and others.

As I sat in the chair with Papa's secure arms holding me I closed my eyes to project the words since none of us could hear. "Do you know what today is?" I didn't think even I knew the number but it was some day in March. Papa's birth month. He'll be 49! I am 13! Maybe Will didn't know the day. He didn't say anything.

"That's all right," the man said, "Do you know who the President is?" I knew this one, it was Reagan! He's on TV sometimes. I don't think Will could remember that either. I wanted to help him out but I was too focused to even so much as look around at the concerned faces of my friends.

Maybe Will wasn't even here. Maybe it was the monster who didn't know these things.

Mike Wheeler

I looked at Dustin, Max, and Lucas as El's battery of power died out and Will's words were lost. Mrs. Byers was sobbing and Jonathan stood stone-faced. Hopper did too. El's upper body fell back onto Brenner like she'd been Force-choked by Darth Vader, and his hand comforted her. "It might be a good idea if you kids go home," Hopper said.

"No way," I said, "We're not leaving Will."

"Thank you guys so much for caring but Hop's right," Mrs. Byers said with tears in her eyes, "You all had better get home." I looked down and then at El asleep Brenner's grasp on her telling me that he wouldn't let her go. I nodded, understanding we'd lost. Dustin sighed.

"We'll come back tomorrow," Lucas said.

"Will would love that," Mrs. Byers agreed. One look at El who was still asleep and I led my party out of Will's room. None of us said anything as we trudged defeated through the stark white halls, my mind on what could possibly have made things go so wrong but it was a strangely happy wrong since it had brought El back to me.

Martin Brenner

The children had left but that did not stop Joyce Byers from hysterically crying as test after test was performed on her son. El woke up around 9 that night and I had been standing by the Byers boy's bed as Ross explained the next test that was in order. We had to see if this thing would talk to us and Joyce Byers was not being very helpful in the feat. I adjusted El as her big brown eyes opened. "Papa?"

"Yes, meine liebling? What is it?" I asked her as I walked out of the Byers room to get her something to eat, "We'll be going home soon. I know you're tired. Did you enjoy seeing your Mike?" She smiled at the mention of Wheeler as we entered the cafeteria.

"Will is linked to Upside Down," she said, "Can feel it. Not Demogorgon. Worse." We entered the cafeteria and I got El some

tomato basil soup and some water. Taking the spoon she ate well, hospital food nowhere near Inge's Swiss feasts but she didn't much mind. "Ross know about Duffer? Maggie said she knew. Swing dance here so explain more?" I didn't know how steady she'd be on her feet but if she wanted to dance in this all but empty cafeteria, she would. No one would challenge her or they'd lose their lives.

"Of course," I said helping her up. The loudspeaker filled the room with Goodman's music like someone had known El's wish. "May I have this dance, Jane Eleven?"

Eleven

I laughed as the music played and Papa twirled me. Being on my feet was a little unsteady but Papa wouldn't let me fall. "I can feel the bad around Will," I said, "Maggie feels it too." As I'd been in and out I'd visited Maggie and asked her if she knew Will and that he was sick. Her nose had bled like mine as she concentrated on finding him. "Maggie was a Locator, Papa."

"She was liebling. That's why they wanted her."

"Was her mama like my mama and she had her born with powers?" I didn't know anything about Maggie's mama and where she was. I hoped she wasn't gone like Mama. "She is gone?"

"Maggie's mama is gone," oh no. That made me throw my arms around him, I was all Papa had for a family that wasn't gone. Unless Opa and Oma weren't gone. "But yes, Maggie was capable of finding anyone. Perhaps she has found this monster."

"Yes. She said so."

"What is it?"

"Not Demogorgon. Scarier. More present. Is Opa alive now? Oma? I hope since Maggie's mama is gone like Maggie."

"Yes, Opa and Oma are alive. We will visit them soon in Washington."

30. It's The Terror of Knowing

Notes for the Chapter:

> And we are now 2/3 of the way through book one woohoo! Congratulations my kids, you've now entered the final act of the first part of this craziness but you're not out of the woods. This last section is dark and book two is DARKER.
>
> As always, let me know how you're feeling about the story!

Chapter 30- The Terror of Knowing
March 12, 1984
Eleven

We didn't go home from Hawkins Gen that night. Instead, Papa insisted on a room for me so I could be showered and changed. Papa washed my hair and put me in a beautiful yellow soft gown that could've been a hospital gown but made me feel like a princess. It had a yellow flower tiara headband to go with that reminded me of Maggie's.

Papa stayed with me as I slept and I let him put in my IV for fluids, the stick not hurting since he knew my good veins. I had woken up to the sun coming in the room and I didn't feel like I was back at the lab because these doctors were so nice to me. I'd spent the night thinking about Will, the monster, and how Papa was alone like me but we would be alone with each other.

I suggested to Papa that I could find Maggie and talk about the monster. I closed my eyes sitting on his lap on the hospital bed, much sweeter than dark tank place. There was a reassurance here that had never been in the tank and it felt I could really let go and know I was safe. Maggie's dimension was bright as ever today.

She came over and hugged me, flowers in her hands for me. "Your friend Will is in trouble."

“Upside Down Monster.”

“The gate is still open,” she said, “I found it a while ago and it scared me, El. I don’t know what the monster is but it possesses those it links to.”

“Will.’

“They need to get the monster to come to them. They need to attack it. But I’m scared that can hurt Will. When I find him, his presence is dark and scary. I think Will’s mom might not be able to handle it so she doesn’t need to be there.”

Max Mayfield

I came back to Hawkins Gen after meeting up with Lucas at his house. Dustin and Mike were already there and had been since visiting hours opened, As I boarded through the sleepy streets next to Lucas on his bike I said, “This is a real shit show, huh?” He smiled.

“Yeah, but honestly nothing’s been the same since a few months ago. The town feels different than it ever did, you know. Everyone’s so on edge of more things happening,” I looked around, honestly you’d never suspect anything weird happening here at all. So the fact that weird things happened here gave Hawkins a creepy vibe mixed with small town USA deception.

‘Well I’m glad I found you, nerds,” I said, “You’ve definitely made Hawkins much more interesting than I was thinking living here would be.”

“Thank you for bringing your badassery to the group,” he said almost getting mushy. I couldn’t look at him, I was not in a mushy mood with this shit going on but I couldn’t deny my fondness for Lucas.

“No problem, Sinclair.”

Martin Brenner

El and Maggie said this monster should talk. And so it would.

El brought herself back and I comforted her with soft-spoken German words, which slowed her breathing down as I could feel her lungs against me working with no need for a stethoscope to hear them. “Burn,” she knew the treatment, “You burn Will to get monster. Hates light and heat. Maggie says its cold and dark. Oh, Papa.”

“You won’t have to see it, El,” I promised her knowing she was already shaken. Ross had brought me an inhalable sedative for her. “Back from ten, liebling,” I said comforting her softly, twining our fingers together, her head secure on my shoulder, “Zhen, neun, acht..” she repeated the German numbers with me as her head and body went limp, her eyes closing softly and her hand almost slipping from my grasp but I held it firm.

Going to Byers room it seemed like the children were all back. Joyce Byers stood up, “And?”

“This monster will talk. But I’m going to draw it out,” Wheeler must’ve seen the lighter in my hand not supporting El. His jaw dropped.

“You can’t do that!”

“And are you going to stop me, Wheeler? I have money on it that you wouldn’t survive your efforts. Now, let's make this creature talk.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> It's no coincidence that the name 'Brenner' comes from the German for 'to burn'. The story is in the little things, the symbolic ones,

31. Burner

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here we go, my kids. Brenner's plan is put to action and be prepared to take another shot (especially you Ab0019!) As always I dig feedback.

Chapter 31- Burner
March 12, 1984
Mike Wheeler

I watched as Ross, one of the junior scientists, tried to take El from Brenner so that the madman would have both hands in case Will got out of hand. But Brenner had none of it, said nothing, and backhanded then threw him so hard that the sound echoed in the room despite so many of us in here. Ross fell to the floor. I saw Dustin take a step back, “Holy shit.”

Then I saw the orange flame from the lighter dance around close to where Will was sleeping but yet seeming so distant from El even though it wasn’t that far from her. I squinted as I didn’t think I could bear to have watched Will be damn near tortured like this because Brenner didn’t care about Will. I was convinced the only person he cared for was Eleven who slept on his shoulder with the strongest shield around her.

Suddenly Will started screaming. It was so loud even I had to cover my ears but my eyes could fill in the blanks well for me. Mrs. Byers screamed, “STOP IT!” at the top of her lungs but that lighter continued to run close enough to burning Will in actuality it made him freak out. But Brenner didn’t stop.

It wouldn’t be hard to visualize the man in a Nazi uniform at that moment.

Martin Brenner

God damn it, Joyce Byers could not shut up.

I ignored her as I watched the boy convulse as I traced the lighter slightly over his torso, not enough to burn him but the heat present to create the illusion. “LET ME GO,” the Byers boy screamed almost as loud as his mother, “YOU’LL HURT HIM!”

“That’s how he’ll talk,” I said like I was explaining this to some child smaller than he. But then Byers, or the monster, reached for El and I didn’t hesitate to strike the monster and Byers but I closed the lighter down. Joyce Byers had graduated from screaming to sobs and the chief comforted her. Byers’ friends stood horrified.

El emerged as I took a step back to stand at the same distance as the others. I turned away from the Byers boy, my concern now for the young girl in my arms. “Papa?”

“Ja, liebling? Es ist vorbei,” I said to her, but she could have guessed since Byers now lay still, translation in the atmosphere of the room rather than words. “Hab keine Angst, liebling.” I could tell the German being spoken to El struck a symbolic chord with Wheeler who looked like a boy who knew recent history. “Wir gehen nach Hause.”

“I’ve got to do something, anything but this,” the boy with the lisp said, “Mike let’s go, man. We don’t need to be here. Lucas? Max?” The other children nodded. “Coming?” he asked El. She shook her head no.

“Later,” she said, “See you guys at house or something. 7:15,” she smiled and waved. “You come too, Max.” The children left, leaving me with Joyce Byers and the Chief. I waited for Joyce Byers to be the first to speak, she did not disappoint.

“Was that really necessary? Given all Will’s been through in the past six months I don’t see how…”

“Would you like your son cured?” I asked, “If not, I’d happily get back on a plane to Zurich so I can put my talents to actual good use and help facilitate Eleven here’s recovery and assimilation,” El smiled hearing her name. She smiled at Hopper and Joyce Byers, “After all,

considering you two sold her out I'd think you owe her that much, a life of happiness and a mental recovery." There was no room to argue.

"Just save the kid," Hopper demanded.

Eleven

We finally came home to the house that afternoon. Ray was there and he had Eggos ready for me, "Original homestyle," he said sitting the plate in my lap as I was set up on the couch my IV drip changed. I was given a Coke which I liked the taste of, very sugary. "Tonight you will have potato salad, some schnitzel, and then perhaps ice cream. I'm told the potato salad recipe was your Oma's."

"Oma," I said, "I bet she is beautiful. I bet she and Opa both are." Papa sat beside me with a picture in his hand, an old one. In it, the woman had on a beautiful dress and a wreath on her head with something attached. The man looked so much like Papa that I figured this must be my Opa who saved Americans.

"Opa Siegfried and Oma Ulla. This is their wedding day in 1933. They both came to America as teenagers," he said, I was engrossed in their story. I bet they had been in lots of love. "I was born two years later, Martin Otto,"

"What does Jane mean, Papa? Eleven means after 10 I think."

"Jane means 'God is gracious'. And to me, 'Eleven' should mean wise and powerful," he said, "You are both, liebling."

Notes for the Chapter:

In a fight who would you bet on: Brenner or Hop?

32. Opa Siegfried

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here we meet Siegfried Brenner, Martin's father who is a surgeon who fought for America in World War II. He's one of my favorite characters to write because knowing him it makes so much sense why Martin is the way he is, the two are very similar. We also will meet his wife Ulla in the next chapter or two.
>
> As always, send feedback!

Chapter 32- Opa Siegfried
March 15, 1984
Siegfried Brenner

“Opa?”

I hadn’t been referred to by that since Maggie’s death all those years ago, so hearing Martin’s adoptive daughter who called herself Eleven do so ignited a feeling I had not known in years. Martin had told me the child’s sad history and her medical history that was so intertwined as an MK Ultra child.

In fact, Martin and I had been communicating about how best to improve my adoptive granddaughter’s health since he had taken her to Zurich. With Ulla and I in Washington, it had been a challenge to coordinate but Eleven’s records and history had been faxed to me to look over. Certainly, no scientist like Martin I looked at my granddaughter's case from a medical standing and I couldn’t imagine her mental injuries that far eclipsed the physical that was far easier treated.

“Yes, Eleven is it? It’s so nice to finally talk to you. You and your Papa must have made it home?”

“Yes. On a plane, plane scary a bit but nice. Should come to see us in Indiana or we go to Washington.’

“You’d love Washington, maus,” I told her, “Tell your Papa you must come. Oma Ulla and I must meet you,” she giggled. I knew Martin would give her anything just like he had Maggie but now the most important gift was that of the denied perfect health.

Martin Brenner

With El on my lap, I talked to my father, “And the IV bags? Surely those will give her the weight she’s missing. I did some reading and she’s suggested to be around 90 to 110 pounds for her age,” Father said, “How are the mental injuries? Many triggers I suspect, like a soldier coming from war.”

“Many. She’s seeing Luca Freund in Zurich but in here the psychologists do not know what she needs.” I was not going to mention Owens’ death, it was irrelevant. “Would Washington have better resources?”

“I’d imagine so. I could get in touch with some psychiatrists I know of but I would not want to mess her routine where she has someone she trusts. She seems quite the skittish little one.”

“She is,” I said as she hung onto every word I said to her already idolized Opa.

Joyce Byers

I startled awake in the chair by Will’s bed to find Dr. Brenner carrying Eleven in and rolling a drip with her. Hop had his hand on my shoulder. Eleven was dressed elegantly but comfortably in fabric that could cost more than the house, light violet with almost a cape around her shoulders but it still resembled a traditional hospital gown like Will’s in a way. I waited for Dr. Brenner to speak. “If you want, I can make sure Eleven’s all right while you take care of Will.” That did nothing to help me.

“Joyce, to be quite frank I would not trust my daughter with those whole willingly sold her location out. Although it was for the best

and yes she does need me if she hadn't come with me and she found out what you did I'm sure her forgiveness would not be extended to you," Damn it, the man's precision of words was so sharp and cold. But to watch him with Eleven was sickening to assume that he actually cared for another.

But her big brown eyes hung on everything he did like he walked on water like most young children think of their parents. "All right," Hop said taking control, "What's our next move with Will?"

I waited, in anticipation. "We bring the monster out again."

"No," I couldn't put Will through something like that again. I wouldn't do it.

"Mrs. Byers, I am trying to save your son. You're making it very difficult for me to do so," the coldness in him had remained, "Again, if you would like me to transfer his case to someone far less capable I'd be happy to."

33. Dig Down

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here we go again, my kids...
>
> As always, keep the feedback coming if you'd be so kind!

Chapter 33- Dig Down
March 15, 1984
Eleven

“Can talk to Will,” I said to Papa as Mrs. Joyce and Hopper looked on, “Might want to talk, the monster,” I looked at Mrs. Joyce, “Won’t hurt Will.” I knew how concerned she must be for Will who looked so pale and sick in the bed while the monitors told he was alive. I hoped I didn’t look as sick as Will looked, but I imagined if I could see my mind I was. Maybe I could ask Opa, I bet he could see and tell me. He was as smart as Papa.

“Could you?” Mrs. Byers was almost crying, “Do you need the bath again?” I shuddered at the thought of the darkness and coldness of that place. Papa’s hand rubbed my shoulder as if he could tell that I wasn’t liking the memories. I hadn’t been to the dark place since finding Will last time.

“Liebling, there will be no bath. Do you really think I would let that happen? You’re in no mental condition to go to that place. Joyce Byers doesn’t understand how sick you are like Freund, Opa Siegfried, and I do.” I knew Opa knew the exact nature of my festering injuries, “Joyce Byers won’t ever understand.”

“So no bath?’

“Nein, liebling, nein Bad,” The German was comforting and although I didn’t understand the exact translation it was easy to figure out what he was saying. I bet he was going to tell Opa about the bath if he hadn’t already. “Does she look to be in the condition where she can do that, Joyce?” Papa said.

Siegfried Brenner

In my study overlooking the National Mall, I had the papers on Eleven spread out on my desk. The reports on her history from Hawkins Lab were certainly disturbing. Years of exhaustive development of her psychic abilities she'd inherited from her mother, Terry Ives, who had been an MK Ultra subject.

Of course with the program beginning around the time of Martin's bachelor's and medical degree training the project had consumed the generation of students who had been trained to fear the influence of the Communists on the world. While I was of a school much older that wrote off experimentation with psychedelics I had kept up with the research I could access.

Thus, I figured my granddaughter had the abilities the scientists were hoping would turn into weapons. Looking through the case history there were notes by Martin and various others but one thing was abundantly clear: Eleven was no ordinary child. She was like Maggie was. Except the Department didn't kill her like they killed Maggie.

And Martin's devotion to the care of this child was the devotion of a repentant man who had much taken from him that all he had left was a thirst for revenge and a quest to restore his second chance to the health and life her sister had been stolen from.

Mein Gott I'd found myself thinking, it was admirable. But I knew the darkness of the Brenner line. I'd killed my fair share of men and I'd imagine Martin had, but his methods far more extravagant than any military issued gun.

Chief Jim Hopper

I knew that instead of helping much, Brenner would seize the chance to rub our wrongs in. He just loved to let the old wounds bleed right as you thought they'd heal. Not to mention the German he spoke to Eleven sent involuntary shudders down my spine but the chair I sat

in hid them thank God. “Thank God you’re a successful chief Hopper,” Brenner was pacing in front of Joyce and I like we were his prisoners again. Eleven held in his arms, him being weary of the IV pole she had attached to her. “Because had you chosen medicine I can tell you right now you’d fail. Although you certainly are a decent police chief, bringing Eleven back to receive the care she needs that you and Joyce clearly do not wish for her what encouraging her to go through a trauma like that,” his eyes met Joyce’s. I reflexively stood up, ready to defend.

“Sit,” Brenner ordered, “I could kill you faster than you could even realize what’s happening or I could simply find other, much worse, ways to get you to go along with whatever must be done,” he never cared about saving Will all he cared about was the science shit that could advance him. And he cared about Eleven in some sick way. “Now, Mrs. Byers do you want me to save William here or not?”

“I just want my boy back,” Joyce demanded.

“That’s what I thought,” Brenner said. Eleven’s big brown eyes looked at Joyce then at me, zircon that held the soul of the richest girl in Hawkins. “As far as Eleven is concerned, her mental wounds are still capable of festering. Do either of you know the term? I wouldn’t be surprised if not. It means her mental wounds can still consume her.”

“Just save Will, Brenner,” I snapped.

“Hopper, you’re lucky I’m a mostly law-abiding citizen. Otherwise, I would have thrown you into that wall there by now."

Notes for the Chapter:

Score: Brenner - 2, Joyce and Hopper - 0

34. Map of the Problematique

Notes for the Chapter:

> So this chapter was so much fun to write because I listened to a lot of Muse (they're a great English band if you haven't heard of them check them out). The title of this chapter comes from one of their songs! We're also introduced to Ulla, Siegfried's wife and Martin's mother.
>
> As always, enjoy!

Chapter 34- Map of the Problematique
March 15, 1984
Eleven

Papa had Ross bring blankets to Will's room so he could set me up on the couch. But these blankets were not from the hospital but from home, warm and familiar. Papa took out my IV to give my body time to process more fluids, a bandage put on my arm to cover the little stick. Mrs. Byers stood by Will's bed and Hopper stood behind her. You'd think Papa would be by Will too but he stood by me, our hands linked.

"Ross, let's question the boy," Papa said, "Sit him up," Ross did so and I watched him with intrigue, looking from him to Will to Papa. "He been asleep like what I have on the plane?" I asked.

"Not quite. The monster has been controlling him."

"Demogorgon."

All of the sudden, Will's eyes shot open, brown like mine. But he didn't seem to be looking at me or Mrs. Byers or Papa but his eyes rolled. I wanted to look away but his body began to shake like badly. I had never seen shaking like that before in my life, but my head remained fixed in its turned position. "Extraordinary," Papa said, "The monster has full possession."

“DO SOMETHING,” Mrs. Byers cried, Hopper having to hold her back. I felt so sorry for her. Hopper was trying to calm her but Mrs. Byers was not having it, “WILL! Will baby it’s Mom…” I was secretly glad Mike and the party weren’t here because this was one of the hardest things I had ever watched.

“Lorazepam?” Ross suggested. Papa shook his head.

“No. This is not a typical seizure.”

Siegfried Brenner

I called Ulla into my study, she brought a tray of coffee for this mid-morning. “Perle,” I had always called her my pearl, “Come look at these records. This is the history of our adoptive granddaughter, Eleven.” I could see her nurse’s brain piecing things together given that she was not a typical woman of her era. Ulla had been as ambitious as I and her ambition had made her the most successful nurse I knew.

“Dear God, Siggy,” she said looking up at me, “I’m surprised he hasn’t shut down the department,” Martin certainly had the influence to do so but I knew he wanted lives, not something as petty as a shutdown lab system. His revenge would not be against the government but on an individual scale. It was Wagnerian his quest for revenge. “She’s such an adorable little thing, but too skinny. She needs fluids.”

“Yes, Perle, she’s receiving them, Martin is administering them. I have the number of her Swiss psychologist and I think I shall give him a call.”

“Swiss, you say?”

“Yes. The American mental healthcare is still quite full of quacks, nowhere good enough for the child, Martin knows it. So he is giving her the best.”

“Fitting for a Brenner,” Ulla smiled.

Martin Brenner

After the monster had calmed in Byers again the boy went limp like El would when her powers were used. Interestingly, the Byers boy's heart rate and O2 stats plummeted once more. The monitor gave readings of 85 percent oxygen and a heart rate of 50. Joyce Byers started her screaming again, "SAVE HIM!" Ross looked at me, my eyes fixed on the monitor. Hopper once again held Joyce Byers, this time in his arms her trembling visible.

Taking that initiative, I picked Eleven up, her eyes as fascinated as mine with the Byers boy. Ross had been attempting to stabilize him but the attempts had thus failed. "90," El said and sure as it were the boy stabilized, the monitors silencing their assault of alerts. Joyce Byers almost fell to her knees, Hopper kissing her. I picked El up, her little feet far away from the encased syringe of Phenol I'd considered killing Hopper with.

No, Byers did not die that day, but yet again the monster told us Byers was his.

35. Your Eyes Open

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hello, my kids!
>
> So this chapter packs in a lot I think so be prepared. Also if you'd be so kind kudos and comments give me life! Enjoy!

Chapter 35- Your Eyes Open
March 15, 1984
Mike Wheeler

Hopper said it was best we didn't go to the hospital, things were bad. Lucas, Max, and Dustin had been with me at my house and we'd tried to entertain ourselves but that wasn't helping the anticipation. "This is such shit," Max said. I nodded.

"Yeah. Like what's happened that's so bad we can't visit? Something pretty bad," Lucas said, "Can we call Will's hospital room? Talk to him."

It was better than nothing. With my parents and Holly out and Nancy somewhere we had the house to ourselves. I ran up the stairs and dialed the operator to connect me to the hospital. Then I was connected to Will's room, almost not expecting an answer on the other line but I got one and it was not what I expected. "Mike."

"El? What's going on?"

"Bad things. Will almost died. The worst thing I seen, ever. Papa protected me. Mrs. Byers so sad, Hopper comforting." Holy shit. "Don't come. Not safe."

But that made me want to come there even more.

Eleven

Mrs. Byers was crying, bad. Hopper was being so sweet with her which made me happy. We stayed at the hospital that day and when the sky became dark Papa took me to have a bath at home. The window from the bathroom of my room could overlook some of Hawkins which was all but shut down. People were sleeping by now, I had no idea what time it was. “Can we call Opa and Oma and Freund tomorrow?” I asked. I hadn’t talked to Oma yet and wanted to know her and love her as much as I already adored my soft-spoken but smart Opa. And I missed my sweet Swiss friend who simply talked to me, promising to become part of my ever-growing family.

“Of course,” Papa said patting my shoulder. I could see my ribs still but I was more fascinated by watching my lungs work, rising and falling. I bet Opa Siegfried had studied lungs. I bet Papa had too. “We’re going to head back to the hospital, but you can sleep liebling, I’ll be with you.” He put me in a beautiful aqua colored soft dress that had a white cape for around my shoulders. Wrapped in Freund’s blanket I felt like that little girl Madeline that I’d seen in a storybook once. I loved having Papa carry me, it made me feel safe from the world.

Being in the hospital with him carrying me didn’t make me scared of hospitals. If I’d been Will though I would be very scared especially at night as the lights seemed to shine brighter on things like Papa’s shoes or the white coats that flanked us soon as we walked in the doors. “Any more episodes with the boy?” Papa asked.

“No, sir, but we’re waiting for this thing to emerge again. Certainly, now that it has full control these emergences will be more frequent.”

“And other than that?”

“The boy’s in a perfect coma.”

Martin Brenner

El fell asleep as I sat with her on the couch in Byers’ room at Hawkins Gen. I could not resist the opportunity to again explain to Hopper and Joyce Byers that even though they were right in their choices

months back they would not be awarded El's grace. "You must not care much about the severity of her injuries," I said, El's hand in mine. Hopper rolled his eyes.

"Most of them you caused, isn't that right?" Hopper asked, looking at me in the eye but he couldn't hold the gaze.

"I admit, it's an honor in actuality to be allowed in her presence. Yes, I know what I did and I will spend the rest of my days repenting. You two, however, are in denial of what your role is here. Curious since one of you is employed to catch criminals and make them repent, isn't it? Yes, she's mentally weak. Her powers and mind strong but the wounds on her mind are weakening her, years of trauma my father suggested. So many fears in such a little one fear of something as simple as closed doors. I've just gotten her to enjoy baths if the circumstances are aligned."

"Yes, we screwed up," Hopper said, "Yes we admit it. Let it go if you really wish to help her, this is only hurting her."

"And you'd do better were you in my position? I doubt it, you'd lock her away like some dragon guarding the tower. I suppose it doesn't matter since she's in the hands and the life she deserves to be in, with the best medical care that is nowhere near available here."

"You're here to help Will," Joyce Byers said, "I don't want to pull this card, but Eleven can wait."

"Last I checked, your son is in a coma, Mrs. Byers. He's stable for the time being and if that changes Ross here will handle him. So, let's continue the conversation." Eleven's eyes opened, her smile on me.

"Lay down with blankets, Papa. Sorry I woke."

I shushed her gently, "Nein, liebling. Lass uns schlafen," I took too much pleasure in watching Joyce Byers shudder at the German's precision but it calmed El who saw the beauty through the historically associated darkness.

I should've panicked waking in a hospital room, no Will or anyone else but Papa was there so I knew I was safe. Someone stood by Papa that looked like him, just as tall as he was. I couldn't believe my eyes: was this my beloved Opa Siegfried? The affirmation of my theory came with the word, "Maus. Do you recall me?" I nodded.

"Opa."

"Yes, maus, I have come to help your Papa help you," he said, there being a slight hint of German accentuation on his words in English. "You know I helped Americans in the War and now I come to help you," he had a pen in his hand, "What I want you to do for me, maus, is follow this light with your eyes. See, it doesn't hurt," he turned on the light and just shone it on the walls to show me before it came to my eyes. I followed it, intrigued.

"Knew I'd meet you one day, Opa," I said.

"You see, maus, I had been planning on coming after talking to you and your Papa. Your Oma is here too, she's just getting food for you from downstairs," he gave me his hand to hold, "She's bringing you a Coca-Cola and Eggos you love." Opa must have worked with kids like me before I guessed because he was so good. I asked him. "Oh, of course, maus. I've worked with so many people since I started helping them. But you and your sister Maggie are by far the most incredible people I have ever seen. You see, you two take the Brenner line's uniqueness to the next level. You two are our princesses," I heard the beeping monitor like Will's behind his words and he must've seen my gaze shift, "See? That doesn't hurt, does it?"

"No."

"We would never hurt you, Jane Eleven," Papa kissed my hair and I slumped back onto him, further into the security in this hospital room. But I was doubly protected by Papa and Opa.

36. I Solemnly Swear

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here we go, things are about to amp up in the final push to the end of book 1! Enjoy and drop by some feedback if you could, it helps me out big time!

Chapter 36- I Solemnly Swear
March 16, 1984
Martin Brenner

El let Father take her blood, so disarmingly he did it that she hadn't felt it, a trick he had taught me in medical school. I held her for comfort because I knew this hospital frightened her but the Byers boy and Joyce Byers' panicked nature kept me tethered here even though I could care about his fate in repayment for her apparent feelings for my daughter.

Mother brought El food and painted her nails for her, so delighted at meeting her granddaughter. With us comforting her, El let Father and I plainly discuss her case history, even the most traumatic bits and answered our questions to her. "You were given shock treatments, maus? And your Papa says those hurt you."

"Scared me, Opa," she told him, "Owens I think didn't like me. I told Freund and he said it might violate human rights and oath, whatever that is."

"Primum non nocere," my father said the words he and I had sworn our lives to and I had violated, now trying to redeem myself daily, at least when it came to El. "It's a very important phrase, maus. This Owens isn't likely to have sworn on his life for it like Papa or me."

"Here, lovely," Mother said giving El a sip of her Coke, "We don't have to talk about it," her fingers gently twirled El's curls. "Your hair is so beautiful. I bet your papa washes it with the finest shampoo."

Eleven

Opa showed me the crank on the bed in my room and I had fun turning it with my powers, going up and down the head of the bed. “You are incredible, Jane Eleven,” Papa said once I had gone back to resting on his shoulder, he lying atop the covers, arm around me. Opa sat holding my hand, Oma by him with my food plate on her lap if I wanted any. “Dr. Brenner,” both Papa and Opa turned to Ross, “The monster is speaking through the Byers boy.”

Papa picked me up, my legs latched onto him far from his syringe ever loaded. Opa rose to his feet too and as we Brenners walked down that hall I felt powerful. My papa and opa were two of the most brilliant medical minds maybe ever and my oma was feminine grace and feminine brilliance encased in a single person, a product of her era where women stood up because for the first time they could. I hoped to be like her.

Getting to Will’s room with all my equipment still hooked up having been rolled along for the ride I could hear Will’s machines freaking out, unlike mine that had a nice sound. “I want to see how far this thing would drop him,” Papa said, “We’ll use Eleven as our control here.” I knew that term but I could also sense that Papa would kill anyone who dared touch me that lacked the talent of him or my grandfather. He watched as Will’s machines continued freaking out. And I was the picture of stability, lungs working perfectly heart pumping.

95 O2 stats to 85 heart rate. Pretty good, no?

“YOU CAN’T LET THIS THING KILL MY BOY,” Mrs. Byers screamed but Papa didn’t respond. Opa kept watch on my machines that never changed as Will’s went down, down, down. But I don’t think the monster wanted his life.

Just his vessel. All of it.

Dustin Henderson

Screw it, we were going to the hospital.

And no one seemed to notice us sneaking out of Mike's or getting to the small building. We knew exactly where to find Will, each of us flanking the others as forms of protection. If we saw a Demogorgon I'd be ready. I had rocks in my pocket and in my backpack. There was loud beeping coming from Will's room and after slipping in I realized we'd made a grave mistake.

"Abort," I whispered but I was frozen. I could see Mike's eyes go to the machines on Eleven, the only stable thing in the room. I could hear the bad scientist and another speaking rapid German. Like I'd bet the Nazis did or something. "We got to go guys."

"SAVE HIM FOR THE LOVE OF GOD," Hopper screamed. But the scientists didn't hear him. My eyes darted back to Eleven, her machines still calm and her eyes on the scientists who looked alike. "DO ANYTHING," Hopper again.

"Holy shit," Max said.

I was not about to watch Will die.

Eleven

Mrs. Byers was crying again after the monster let Will go, back into his coma whatever that was. Our machines matched sounds as I listened. I looked at Papa and then at Opa trying to see what they thought. "Come," Opa said, "Ross can handle things from here." He led me and Papa out of the room, Papa's hand stroking my hair as Opa rolled my machines.

"I liked that experiment, but sad for Will," I told Papa, "No one poked at me this time ever," I knew he and Opa would never poke me but I had almost expected Ross to or someone. Papa shushed my fears gently and Opa said,

"Most of the medical community is unworthy of even touching you, maus. Do you think Papa or I would let them?" I liked how calming Opa's words were like he had Papa's gift of being able to see my fear.

I shook my head. I wondered if he'd been like this to the Americans he'd helped in the War. "Good. And I know you heard the word control. I know you know that word."

"Yes. The bad men, Opa. But Papa isn't like them. I know he's not."

"The Department of Energy this was that sanctioned this research?" Opa asked Papa, "I have a direct line to the President," I wonder if he meant Reagan, who was the only President I knew of in America, "And should I call him I can have him shut down the Department's projects."

"Fight Communists," I said to Opa.

"Yes, we must do that but to have this research performed on two Brenner children is certainly not the way to do that." I wondered just how influential we were if Opa knew Reagan. Maybe I could meet him.

37. Supremacy

Notes for the Chapter:

> This chapter was so cool since we get to see Siegfried's surgical skills in action. Also, this chapter is one of those I hope the depth of the story comes across in the minute details so pay attention there. As always enjoy my kids and send feedback!

Chapter 37- Supremacy
March 16, 1984
Siegfried Brenner

That night we remained at the local hospital in Eleven's room, the only room to not share a bathroom with the next room over and the only room on the third floor. As Martin ran sponges over her skin Eleven did not seem ashamed in front of him, Ulla, or me. The bathroom's door she insisted was open, she being afraid so easily of anything she considered isolation like a closed door.

There was no shame written on her, the mindset of a European and a daughter of a medical family she didn't stop acting like she was doing anything abnormal and it was admirable to the Americans who saw the shame in the machinery of a living body not the beauty in the intricacies of how we lived. Although, the poor girl had begun to bleed in womanhood's fashion but again there was no shame as Martin took care of things for her, medically precise but with his empathy reserved for her. "El, sit still liebling," he said to her and she did, holding his free hand, "You see? All done." He had been so fast she might not have processed it.

"I can be a mama one day like Oma, Opa," she said, the idea empowering to her but not one she embraced in any other way that it being a fact for now.

"One day you could be, maus," I agreed. She looked at the monitors that showed how stable she was as I said to Martin, "Any more news of the Byers son?"

“He’s been comatose but stable,” Martin said as he lifted a simple white gown over Eleven’s head. On the bodice, there were red gems lining the gown, the most beautiful hospital gown awarded to a girl who deserved the world given to her. “There,” He lifted her from the sink, the frailty of her form that yet managed to function perfectly in the safest care as he held her. “But the Byers boy will be dealt with.”

Eleven

Papa gave me a little warm thing to rest on my stomach, his hand helping me hold it. He stroked my hair, “It will make you feel better liebling,” he told me. Opa patted my head. I decided I didn’t like this bleeding, it made me feel weird some days especially when it first started. I turned my eyes up to Opa.

“Take out?” I asked him, knowing he could. Maybe he could stop it so I could feel good all the time, “Stop bleeding?”

“I can,” he said.

“How? Hurt me?” I hugged the warm thing as I felt my stomach turn, burying my head into Papa’s shoulder. Opa shook his head no.

“No, maus. It wouldn’t hurt you. You’d be too deeply asleep to know it was happening,” he smiled and kissed my forehead. Opa helped Americans so I knew he could help me. “We’ll make sure everything is perfect, maus.”

“Soon?” I asked Papa.

“If you’d wish it, liebling, we can have you prepped in an hour,” Papa said softly. Oma squeezed my other hand.

Martin Brenner

Getting El ready for surgery was nowhere near the process I had expected. Her trust in my abilities and Father’s calmed her considerably. She let me put stickers on her chest to measure her

heart and breathing while she was asleep while Father offered words of affirmation to her in German. “You’re so beautiful, maus.”

“Really Opa?”

“You are one of the most beautiful girls alive. All the Brenner women are gifted with beauty,” he said, kissing her forehead. My hand ran over her shoulder and her hand in mine squeezed, her eyes turning to me.

“This not like lab?”

“No, Jane Eleven, it’s nothing like the lab.”

“Opa Siggy and your Papa will take the best care of you,” Mother said, “A Brenner lady deserves that. We are queens, Eleven.”

The bright lights of the operating theatre did not scare her as she sat with me in the chair by the table I’d lift her onto once she was asleep. She smiled at me and then at Father who lifted her chin upwards, “Look up here at me, maus. Excellent,” he was so good with her it was like he’d been treating her for years. Mother stood beside El, stroking her hand dressed in the gown to keep the room sterile. "All you do now is breathe. Excellent, maus."

El’s big brown eyes stayed focused for as long as they could before they started to close, her head slumping back onto me as she couldn’t fight the drugs. Before he began, Father looked at me: “Is she that skittish to believe we would turn on her like that and use this as a chance to experiment on her? Poor child, she is so scared.”

“She’s been through a lot,” I said lifting her to the table.

“When we have the names of her tormentors we will deal with them in an adequate manner, no matter.”

38. To Protect Her

Notes for the Chapter:

> I loved writing Mike's section he's so funny but his concern for El is heartwarming. Also Brenner makes a good pint in explaining why exactly Siegfried did what he did (there were multiple reasons, but as Martin says the most important reason is actually a bit obvious). As always, remember to look in the little details. Oh, and still be afraid for Will I haven't forgotten him. And pay attention to something I'll say now: from now on the phrase "whatever it takes" is in effect.
>
> Enjoy!

Chapter 38- To Protect Her
March 16, 1984
Mike Wheeler

I split up from the party getting to the hospital and I ran up to the third floor where I knew El might be. But as I went to look for her I found Brenner and his party walking that way, El asleep with monitors and an IV as he held onto her. There was no sign of any trauma on her something I was grateful for. She seemed to sleep well. “What have you done?” I shouted at Brenner, but it looked like El was as beautiful as ever. Her hair was in a waterfall and her gown as white as the walls, her eyes closed like she hadn’t heard me. I looked at the monitors that beeped softly, her stats nothing like Will’s, they never plummeted past normal.

“Wheeler, in the room. Now,” Brenner snapped and I followed him and the others. He laid with El on the bed and I noticed she had the tube of a catheter in. “Do you really think,” Brenner said, “I’d let anything happen to her like I’m willing to let Byers die for science? Your party has never truly cared for Eleven’s health, making her submerge herself in the Upside Down to save Byers. Maybe he should die for that. Then everything would be solved, no?”

“If you let Will die, Hopper will arrest you,” God damn it Wheeler, what was that? I thought to myself but I wasn’t backing down no matter how stupid I sounded.

“Byers means nothing to me and Hopper stands not a chance against me and he understands it well. Do you even know what my father just did for Eleven? Should, in ten or twenty years the Department of Energy still be fighting the Russians they will hunt any child she bears. Her abilities could pass genetically,” I didn’t know why he was telling me this but then it struck me. What if El and I were ever to have a baby? The thought was too much. “Now she’ll be safe because they won’t even live that long.”

Eleven

I didn’t understand that lots of time had passed when I woke up with Papa holding onto me. It was getting dark outside, pretty colors were let into the room. I could see many flower arrangements, were they all for me? I lay on my back, Papa’s hand securing me to him. I could look down but there was no sign that anything had happened except a small tube. I also didn’t feel bad, but maybe IV had medicine in it now. “Papa.”

“It’s all right, El. See, did that hurt you?”

“No.”

“You are so brave,” Opa said, he was standing by me, no blood on his hands. “By far, maus, you are the easiest patient I have helped.”

“I did it Opa.”

“You indeed, my little maus. You did the best out of any patient I have ever seen, no?” He kissed my forehead and his hand rested on my shoulder. I liked kisses they made me feel so special. A queen, Oma said. Was I a queen?

“Are all Brenner women queens, Papa?” I asked him. “Oma said I was.” I could feel him rub my back gently.

“El, you are a queen to all of us,” Papa said giving me a sip of water from a bottle, “Do you know how many people worship you and are mesmerized by every time you breathe?”

“Your heart stronger, Papa.”

“Here, little one,” Oma said sweetly, “More sips of water.” I took them and she touched my forehead, “Your Opa and Papa said you did beautifully.”

“All gone?” I asked Papa, “I want to go back to Switzerland,” then I saw Mike who had two carnations in his hand, “Mike.” He smiled and came over to my bed; he must be here for Will. I hoped Will was doing okay after the monster had him last. Mike put the carnations in my hand. “Pretty. Beautiful. Thank you,” he kissed my forehead, his lips clumsy like he didn’t kiss many foreheads like Papa or Opa.

“You’re welcome, El.”

“Will okay Mike?” I asked, thinking about Mrs. Byers who cried for Will lots and it made me sad for her.

Luca Freund

I was up late that night when the phone rang. Issie and Alessio were already asleep and I looked out on the Alps alone as I answered, “Freund,” I answered not knowing who might call this late.

“Freund, miss you,” it was my sweet Eleven, the little girl who had learned to let me in. She was back in America now but Brenner said they’d be back soon, they couldn’t stay for her health. “Want to come see you, meet wife and son. Dinner.”

“The night you get back we will have you for dinner,” I promised, “Are you doing all right?”

“Surgery,” she said, “Opa took away bleeding.” Siegfried Brenner had contacted me a few days ago and he seemed like a man like his son and I who devoted himself to this girl to help her live the life she deserved to. Siegfried Brenner’s talents were unmatched as far as I

knew, so she was in the most capable hands.

“You can tell me when you get here,” I told her.

“Yes! Love you Freund. Excited to see you!”

39. The Exorcism of Will Byers, Act I

Notes for the Chapter:

> If you even glanced at the chapter title that might hint that this is about to get STRANGE, my kids. Anyway, hope you all enjoy and I'll be posting all the chapters in this little arc so that means three today and the rest tomorrow and maybe the last one as late as Thursday and then onto book 2!
>
> Anyway, hit that kudo button or comment to tell me how freaked out you are!

Chapter 39- The Exorcism of Will Byers, Act I
March 17, 1984
Chief Jim Hopper

“Joyce, I love you, but this isn’t a good idea,” I said but it was hopeless. Joyce’s mind was made up and nothing I could say to her now would result in a change of action. What was most ironic out of all the things she’d let Will go through to save him was that as not the most religious woman by any means she was now turning there as the last hope.

“We have to do something, Hop,” she was all but sobbing, “Brenner and his team don’t care about Will! So we have to save him ourselves!”

“This thing isn’t a demon that possesses him, Joyce. You’re wasting your time and his and you know I’m right,” she needed to hear that. I knew she knew it. The last thing the kid needed was another traumatic experience. “You’d need a doctor to sign off on this, wouldn’t you?” As much as I hated Brenner, the man had the degree I needed to shut this plan down.

“Not exactly.”

Fuck.

Eleven

I woke up that morning in the hospital room to the monitors beeping softly. Oma and Opa sat by my bed and my head rested on Papa's shoulder, my eyes looking at the beautiful orange flowers from Mike next to two full arrangements of violets and orchids from Opa and Papa. "Dr. Brenner," I could hear Ross, "Joyce Byers has scheduled an exorcism for her son today."

"Mein Gott," Opa said, "The woman's mad. This thing is not a demon and cannot be treated with religious foolery. She's wasting her time."

"No," Papa said, "But she does not know that, she's far too irrational to know it. Ross, tell Joyce Byers I will sign off on this. Let's have her learn the hard way, shall we? Or if this procedure draws out the monster it might be revealing as the burning. Certainly, it's no demon, but it could be smart enough to trick priests and Joyce Byers into thinking it is."

"Yes, sir," Ross left the room, "I'll report back whenever the priest arrives." He left. I had no idea what an exorcism might be like, but it sounded scary to me. I had no idea what a priest was either.

"What is priest?" I asked Papa. "Smart as you?"

"It's someone who does religious things," he told me, "And some might be as smart as me, but I doubt they could do the things I do, El. Joyce Byers wants one to bring the monster out of Will."

"Won't work," I said, "Monsters aren't religious, are they?"

"No, they're not."

"We go see?" I wondered what that might be like. I don't think it could be scarier than the last thing I saw happen to Will. Papa kissed my hair.

"After we change your wound dressing and bathe you, we can."

Max Mayfield

Wait, what the hell?

I looked at Lucas, then Dustin and Mike. We'd been visiting Will this morning when I thought I had heard Hopper say the word exorcism like Will was possessed or something. Dustin looked at Mike. Lucas looked at me like he'd heard that word too. "You guys should probably go on," Mrs. Byers offered us a smile like we hadn't thought she was serious.

"Yeah," Hopper said, "Joyce's right. You all had better go on home. You can come back this afternoon." It looked like he knew Mrs. Byers might be nuts but what could he do? I felt for him. Lucas tapped my shoulder.

"Has she seen the Exorcist?" I asked Lucas in a whisper, "That shit's terrifying." Lucas shrugged his shoulders rather than risk reply since he wasn't as good at whispering. "Come on guys," I spoke up, not wanting to stick around since this was really going to be a thing, "Hey Mike is Eleven still here? We should go see her. She's upstairs, right?"

"Yeah."

"Let's go," I started my way out not looking to see if my band of nerds called friends was behind me. They could have nightmares for months, but not me. I just needed an excuse to leave, my God.

40. The Exorcism of Will Byers, Act II

Notes for the Chapter:

> Only 5 more chapters of book 1 left my kids! As always, drop by some feedback!

Chapter 40- The Exorcism of Will Byers, Act II
March 17, 1984
Ulla Brenner

Siggy and Martin were so sweet to watch with little Eleven, her trust in them like mine in Siggy when we'd met in 1929 when he had been a resident at a hospital in Washington. I, at the time aged 17 had broken my ankle dancing in the jazz clubs of my youth. His manner with me had been so professional but caring and to watch him now with our granddaughter almost 55 years after I'd met and fallen for the sweet German resident I saw his manners would never change.

And now with Martin having inherited his father's empathy with his family watching my son do what Brenners did was mesmerizing. "Maus, we're going to put more morphine in for you," Siggy said to the little girl he was now devoted to, "Have you felt anything since you woke up?" Siggy squeezed her hand, his bedside manner impeccable.

"No, Opa."

"Good, liebling," Martin said, kissing the Brenner princess' head softly. Watching him warmed my heart. Ever since Maggie had died I hadn't thought I'd seen my son have the amount of love he'd reserved for her given to another child. I could see in the gentle way he unwrapped the gauze on her stitches to the tender words as he disinfected the stitches that he would do anything to keep her happy and out of any kind of pain.

Mike Wheeler

I left Will's room reluctantly, but we didn't even have to go to the third floor to find El. It was like they were coming because they knew that Mrs. Byers was planning this exorcism. El was laying in a portable hospital bed with covers up to her stomach, her head raised and her hand securing Brenner to her like a princess who was strong but knew she needed a knight for backup, devoted as I was. "Mike."

"Hi, El," I said kissing her cheek, hopefully, better than I did her forehead. Her big brown eyes shone when they looked at me. "You feeling better?"

"I haven't felt anything in a while," she said to me, "Numb. Pain controllers. Will's mom is going to use religion for Will, Mike. Do you know religion?"

"Not really," my parents were Lutheran but I'd never really paid attention much on Sundays sitting in the church. El nodded, the lights of the hallway shining on her curls and glinting on the citrine clips in her hair that had to be real and worth more than my house. The echo of the monitors that proved El was alive in my ears.

"Hopper tried to stop this?" she asked.

"Yeah I think, but Mrs. Byers seems pretty convinced this is right," we turned down the hall to enter Will's room, my hand cold from the metal of the bed's rail but warm since El's hand that was free rested on mine.

Eleven

Papa picked me up carefully, Opa holding onto my machines, as we entered Will's room. It felt good to be out of bed and tonight maybe I'd get bath. There was a new person there who I don't think anyone but Mrs. Byers knew, she called him Bishop Schnapp. Bishop Schnapp looked nice enough but he might be about to do a scary thing to Will. I watched from Papa's shoulder my eyes fixed.

"Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary,

mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

I didn't know a Mary, but whoever she and her baby were they might help Will Bishop Schnapp thought so I hoped so too. He said that same thing over and over but nothing happened to make Will better. "Not working," I said to Papa but Mrs. Byers couldn't hear me.

"He's not a demon El, so it can't be like that."

"Stop it then?"

"No, liebling, they won't. They're relying on pseudoscience, which is not a real or good method," he said. I bet nobody knew real science as good as Papa did. "But people only learn from mistakes by making them."

Notes for the Chapter:

> Oh yeah, and how about that little bit of insight into how Ulla and Siegfried met?

41. The Exorcism of Will Byers, Act III

Notes for the Chapter:

> And does it work? Is Will finally safe? Answers (to one of these questions) ahead, my kids. And now only 4 more chapters until we're done with the first book and onto darker things! As always, enjoy!

Chapter 41- The Exorcism of Will Byers, Act III
March 17, 1984
Mike Wheeler

“Come on you son of a bitch, let him go!” Mrs. Byers had to be talking to the monster because after the fourth ‘Hail Mary’ Will’s eyes started to roll in the back of his head, the whites visible from where I stood by my friends unshielded like Mrs. Byers by Hopper or El in Brenner’s arms. Mrs. Byers had tried to reach for Will but Hopper pulled her away.

No. He is MINE.

“Did you hear that?” Dustin asked, “That voice. That wasn’t Will but it came from him,” Now things were just plain scary, scarier than when I’d read Carrie. “Holy shit.”

“Yeah,” I said, “He’s got Will. The monster,” I don’t know why I was stating what we all knew, but I guess maybe it was to justify the looks of horror we wore. Except for Brenner, he had on a smile like Dr. Frankenstein like this wasn’t something terrible. And then there was the man who looked like Brenner, his father, same thing. Not horrified but rather intrigued.

Byers belongs to ME.

Siegfried Brenner

“Astounding.”

Martin said the word I was thinking as I tried to memorize the voice this monster spoke with. The ignorant Schnapp was now shouting prayers, prayers that would not save Byers or any of us from this thing if they tried. Ulla stood at my shoulder, an inch behind me, “Dear God, Siggy.” she said, “This will not help them.”

“They must lie in their bed, Perle,” I was nowhere near concerned for any of these people and if Byers died he died. Martin nodded from beside me, young Eleven secure and the picture of what a body living perfectly with a wounded mind could do. In spite of the chaos, she still smiled at Martin and for a moment it was almost like he had both Eleven and Maggie with him. Joyce Byers screamed and my head turned.

SAY GOODBYE TO WILL BYERS the voice coming from the boy said.

“DO SOMETHING!” Joyce Byers screamed, tears in her voice along with the desperation. The police chief had to hold her back. “Save my boy!”

Hail Mary full of Grace.

Eleven

Everything’s coming up cherries, I heard that phrase once. But here no cherries as Will thrashed and religious Schnapp even had to stop his calling for Mary and her son to help. I wondered why Mary wasn’t helping Will but maybe even she couldn’t see this monster that had Will. Mrs. Byers couldn’t stop crying and Hopper ordered Schnapp to stop.

“Mein Gott,” I said, using Opa’s phrase of surprise.

“That’s enough,” Hopper said, “Joyce, this isn’t helping us or Will. Thanks for trying though, Bishop. But Will needs actual science, no offense,” he looked at Schnapp who gave a sorry smile that he couldn’t help Will.

But Will had not stopped freaking out, screaming and shaking. I wondered if they might put him to sleep to stop it, just like the morphine running through my veins now told my body to not feel

anything below my belly button. And morphine made me kind of sleepy so maybe Will could sleep on it.

“You all probably need to leave,” Schnapp said, “Give Joyce some time with Will.” I looked at Mike who was almost shaking himself but hid it well from most. I was put back in the mobile bed, Opa making the covers warm around me and Papa spoke soft German.

“Lass uns schlafen, liebling.”

42. Way Down We Go / Down to Your Core

Notes for the Chapter:

> Here we are loves, three chapters until the end of book 1! I'm so stoked!
>
> As always, send in kudos or comments!

Chapter 42- Way Down We Go / Down to Your Core
March 17, 1984
Maggie Brenner, in her "Heaven"

"So they did an exorcism?" I'd never been raised with much of religion but I did know that my family's own Protestant roots had made the concept of exorcism seem to me like a medieval one. El sat with me looking out at the mountains and the rainbow above them. We had our flower crowns on and I was blowing on a dandelion.

"Yes. Priest there who used religion. Papa says it's not real science," she said and I could see my father using those words. In fact, Opa probably would agree. As a family invested in the sciences as we were it was hard to accept things like the absolutes religions required of believers. I nodded. Although my mind was geared more towards arts and languages like my family's preferred German the science was still cool even if it went over my head.

"And it didn't work, did it?"

"No. Papa and Opa knew it. I said you found the monster."

"He can't hurt me, but yes I found his place. It's not like here, El. It's like the Upside Down so dark and cold. And he wants Will, I've heard it."

"Why?"

"To be the new overlord of the Upside Down and to be the one behind the scenes as they take over Hawkins."

Martin Brenner

It was a relief from the chaos of the Byers room to hear the monitors showing El's capability to live. Wheeler and his party followed out of the room, each of them stunned by things they couldn't have imagined. Such naivete that made me pity them almost for a second, the world's truths coming to break them as it breaks everyone Hemingway notes. Father and Mother pushed El's bed and I walked alongside, her head turned my way.

"Fools," Father said, "The lot of them. I see why the psychologists are not much better. Pseudoscience has taken their minds. Nazis they call us, but mind you I'd reserve that for them," the elevator was in perfect timing and one of the technicians under Ross at the former lab, Levy, stepped out.

"Dr. Brenner. Did the exorcism fail?"

"As expected, Levy. The Byers woman is hysterical and even the Chief of hers cannot calm her. That thing wants the boy adamantly so if it takes him, it takes him. Ross is still in the room."

"And Miss Jane?"

"The picture of physical health in her condition. Underweight, yes, but organs functioning well and a day out of surgery," his concern for her was forced on him and I loved it. His need to obey my will put her so far above his pathetic life.

Lucas Sinclair

I think we bolted from there so fast I didn't even register that time passed until we were at Mike's. We crashed our bikes and Max jumped off her board. "Holy shit," she said, actually shook to the point of trembling slightly, "I can't believe they did that."

"I need pudding and a shower," Dustin said. I nodded, not having anything to contribute because it had all been said. We were afraid. Genuinely. "You guys want to play D&D? I need a distraction."

“I don’t think I could focus on it,” Mike said honestly.

“Me either,” I agreed.

“I was going to joke about watching The Exorcist,” Max said, “But I don’t think I have the energy for witty now. I’m freaked out.”

“Yeah,” Mike said.

“Next move? Anyone?” Dustin asked.

“I vote a ride around,” Mike said, “It’s our best shot at this point to clear our heads,” he picked up his bike and we followed at a loss for how else we moved forward.

Chief Jim Hopper

Brenner had just thrown me.

Assaulted a police officer, a crime. And yet I was at his whim because Will’s life was, and Joyce’s sanity. Thank God she wasn’t here to see this. “Now,” he said as I still lay on the floor in the hallway of the third floor of the hospital, “I’d suggest taking your idea or the Byers’ woman’s back before I invite her to watch me end your life in less than a minute.”

“It’d be a way to talk to the thing,” I protested, “Joyce would never hurt El.”

“Words of her Judas,” he said, his voice so god damn elegant in a way that amplified the horror, “Perhaps I could use a locator to intermediate but you’d be far more fun.”

“I can’t find the thing are you crazy?”

“Not to find the thing, you ignorant oaf. To make Joyce Byers realize that questioning me and giving me orders is certainly not wise.” I staggered to my feet, those machines beeping in my ears hauntingly, “You cannot see the injuries physically,” Brenner said, Eleven so small in his arms, “But if I were to show you the extent of the injuries her mind is just starting to heal you might regret allowing Joyce Byers to turn you into her lap dog, no?”

Notes for the Chapter:

And Brenner just DESTROYED Hopper, yet again. What's the score count? I don't even know anymore...

Also, there's a reason the monster would never go after Eleven. Any guesses?

43. Black Widow

Notes for the Chapter:

> Two more, my kids!
>
> And I love this chapter for so many reasons, but especially pay attention to Hopper as the big realization starts to crash down on him!

Chapter 43- Black Widow
March 17, 1984
Eleven

I was allowed a bath today, like real.

I was moved to the room's bathroom that had a bath with rails, but good kind of bath. The door open with Oma watching the door while Opa held me steady and Papa delicately ran a washcloth over me, no blood staining it and the little blue stitches on me just there. My IV pole was beside Opa and I saw him up the morphine by a little. "Am I beautiful?" I asked him and Papa.

"As beautiful as a Valkyrie that Wagner knew of," Opa said, "They are the handmaids of the gods, maus, but to you, they call the queen."

"Jane Eleven, you are one of the most beautiful young women," Papa said as he washed me, no shame in front of him or Opa. Machines, the body was a kind that was superior since it lived. He kissed my forehead, "Always remember that liebling."

"Okay." He got me out and put me in a pretty white gown with sleeves, not like the ones of my childhood but nice and elegant. It almost looked like it was from a different time. He lifted me up, our hearts so close and his arms so safe for me. "Maggie told me today the monster wants new overlord. Will."

"It wants the Byers boy to rule?" Papa asked as he considered the words, "Wants him back in the Upside Down?"

“Yes. Then begin takeover.”

“Take over of Hawkins?” Oma asked me. I nodded at her, now coming to lay in my hospital bed, even safer with Papa and warm covers. Oma sat beside me holding my hand, Opa standing by her. God, I loved them. My boombox brought here had on my mixtape of songs from the era I loved but had not lived.

Joyce Byers

“Oh, Hop,” I said, from my place buried in his shoulder the tears never stopping, “I know she would do this for Will. She found him last year, she can find this monster and stop it.” There were no lights outside, Hawkins asleep for the night. Will was asleep again now.

“Joyce, he won’t let anyone touch her. You don’t need to go up there. I’m not trying to scare you when I say if he wants to kill you, he will. Do you know what happened to Director Duffer? Isn’t it strange we haven’t seen him in a few days since right after Brenner showed up?”

“He didn’t.”

“I think he did. It fits.”

“Arrest him,” I felt the new batch of tears well in my eyes and fall down my face.

“But if I do that, Will’s best hope is gone. He’s played us, Joyce, he and his father. It seems ridiculous and I wish I could do something. But now we need to save Will.”

Ulla Brenner

“That ignorant oaf Hopper,” Martin was saying to Siggy and me. The lights in Eleven’s room had been dimmed and her music softly bringing me back to the era I truly became a woman. I could say to hear my son speak of this Hopper his motives did not sit well for a police chief and I wondered if that was why he might have let all this

happen. “He told me where she was to save Byers’ son, but I suppose I do owe him at least that.”

“Forgive him. Gave me this life,” Eleven said, so wise beyond her years. Her heart reminded me of mine and sweet Maggie’s, balancing the darkness of the Brenner line. And the men yielded to us more often than not for it. Martin kissed Eleven’s cheek if the dim witted policeman burst in now my son would’ve killed him.

“Your soul is the sweetest I have ever met, liebling,” he said, “You see Papa cannot forgive the people who hurt you like you can.”

“Revenge,” she said, “Sweeney.”

“Yes. But tomorrow we will go back to Switzerland to Oase, I’m going to have Eggos on the plane and a five-course Swiss meal fit for an electress.”

“Oh, Papa!”

Notes for the Chapter:

And it's back to Oase Estate for the Brenners!

44. It's A New Dawn, It's A New Day

Notes for the Chapter:

ONE MORE!

So, chapter 45 is super short so this is the last normal length chapter. But be prepared for 45, just saying...

Chapter 44- It's a New Dawn, It's a New Day
March 21, 1984
Eleven

Papa said Freund could come to Oase!

I don't remember the flight back, but I knew Opa and Oma came with us and wow I loved them. Oma brushed my hair every day so beautifully with Inge. Opa would check on my stitches and give me forehead kisses and Papa and I would dance me in his arms, oh I just loved my family.

And that night meeting Issotta, Freund's wife, so beautiful. She fed me pasta and soup and warm bread. And Freund's son Alessio. Such a sweet baby, he smiled as I held him sitting down and kissed his forehead. "Pretty," I'd told Issie who'd smiled.

"You can visit him anytime," she'd told me, "I think he likes you."

"Never met American?"

"Now he has."

Luca Freund

Miss Eleven was dressed in one of her flowing gowns and blue gems clipped into her hair, gems worth more than the house Issie and I owned. Miss Eleven walked to me, the IV still in her arm but not pumping morphine into her system but back to the fluids. He'd taken out her catheter yesterday and she never wavered in her happiness.

Her arms wrapped around my neck, “Freund.”

“Hello, my little sweet one. Today how about we go into Zurich and get some of those waffles? Much better than Eggos, no?”

“Yes. Will we go in the carriage?” she looked at Brenner and his father, both ready to obey her every command for as long as they lived. “We go in carriage and ride horses. Pretty. Don’t know their names.”

“One is Napoleon, the other is Bismarck,” Inge said, “Perfect for Swiss horses, a French and German name. Isn’t that nice?”

“What kind of name is Eleven?” the little electress asked.

“It’s English, liebling,” Brenner said, “Remember we said it meant you were strong.” She smiled and her little arms coiled around Brenner like all she needed was his love.

Siegfried Brenner

Martin had me take out the IV in my little maus’ arm. She didn’t flinch at all like needles were nothing when the thought of a closed door or being alone scared the sweet child to death. In my son’s arms, she was the picture of nobility and the ungodly wealth of the Brenner line. Her shawl lined in emeralds greener than spring, her hair sparkling with sapphires clipped in. But to her, this was just a fun outing about love.

She sat on Martin’s lap, me across from her with Ulla and Freund beside them. As the carriage took of Eleven’s face looked like a child receiving her greatest wish. The two horses pulled us through the sleepy morning streets as Freund said, “Last night I was doing some reading, going back to the Declaration of Geneva and I have reason to believe we could bring international court proceedings against Owens’ practice, or the remaining members. You say he worked for your Hawkins lab?”

“He did. Owens wasn’t anything remarkable for certain but yes he had been a dedicated employee. He sought the directory at the time I

was appointed and I made it well known to him who was in charge."

"Surely there has to be something about shock therapy on a child," Ulla said, "I'd find it hard to believe that there's not a ground there for some sort of action we can take." Listening to her calm sensibilities I knew that Martin would never accept just that. He wanted lives claimed as well as court proceedings. It made sense now that we had named him after Mars, the Roman god of war.

"That might be," Martin said, "But I can assure you I can shut down Owens' practice singlehandedly." He could, but not in the way Ulla might be thinking. His revenge methods were Wagnerian and the thirst for it so deeply within his heart no one could stop him. I looked at the little girl on his lap, she not condemning of him her brown eyes fixed as she hung on his words. Such a young woman of few words but her words like his had power.

"Bad men," she said, "Can find them with pictures. Like Maggie found monster from Upside Down. Will is less himself than yesterday. Monster consuming."

Will Byers

Byers belongs to me. He is mine. I am him. I will reclaim him. WILL BYERS IS MINE.

Mike Wheeler

School dragged on.

Mom had made me go back after the few days she'd let me miss because of Will being in the hospital and El being there too (although I think more so for Will). We had no idea if Will would ever get out of there and now even Mr. Clarke was getting concerned. "Thanks," I said to him as he handed me some homework to bring to Will after last period science. Max, Lucas, and Dustin hung back with me.

"How is he?" Mr. Clarke asked.

“The same,” Max said, ‘His mom is really worried and last time we went there he almost died. It was really freaky, his heart and whatever that other stat thing is dropped so fast.”

“His oxygen?”

“Yeah that. And Mrs. Byers and Chief Hopper were both really worried. To be honest, we don’t know when he’ll be back.”

“Well, if you all need anything for him let me know.”

“Thanks, Mr. Clarke,” I said.

Notes for the Chapter:

Oh hey, a cameo from Mr. Clarke!

45. Bring Him Here

Notes for the Chapter:

> CLIFFHANGER AHEAD (don't say I didn't warn ya!)
>
> And that's a wrap on "Tragico Historia" but the story isn't over. I'll post the start t book 2 ASAP. Thank you for all the support this has received: as an author it means the world that others like my stuff as much as I do. Seriously! THANK YOU!

Chapter 45- Bring Him Here
March 21, 1984
Joyce Byers

“I want my boy transferred,” I said sitting at the conference table on the first floor of the hospital, “Since none of you can treat him or even tell me how this thing works I want a second opinion.” Hopper stood behind my chair at the head of the table, hand on my shoulder.

“Mrs. Byers,” one of them said, “That’s not wise at this juncture. As you’ve seen Will is in a critical condition and should not be moved. We’re doing the best we can.”

“Where the hell is Brenner?” I can’t believe he had just left like that. Well, I could, but it was still so angering.

“He’s in Switzerland, ma’am.” That made it worse.

“Bring him back or I will have Will transferred.”

“Mrs. Byers…”

“Bring him back. Today.”

Notes for the Chapter:

> Now accepting predictions for "STYGIAN" - THE OFFICIAL TITLE OF BOOK 2! (looking at you, Ab0019)

46. Author's Note

If you're interested here's the link to the second book! Again thank you all for reading and enjoy book 2!

https://archiveofourown.org/works/15156176/chapters/35148107